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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Chris Coons (D-Del.) and U.S. Rep. Joe Pitts (R-Pa.) introduced bills in the Senate and House today to add approximately nine miles of White Clay Creek and its tributaries to the existing Wild and Scenic Rivers designation for the waterway. Senators Tom Carper (D-Del.) and Bob Casey (D-Pa.), as well as Rep. John Carney (D-Del.) are cosponsors of the White Clay Creek Wild and Scenic River Expansion Act, which would come at no cost to taxpayers.

“Growing up, I spent considerable time in the White Clay Creek watershed and know that it is an important resource for Delaware and the region,” Senator Coons said. “Years ago, my grandmother donated some of her land along the banks of White Clay Creek to help protect it. It’s up to all of us to fight to protect our natural resources and I’m glad to contribute to the effort to protect the waterway by introducing this legislation today.”

“Years ago, my son and I used to fish the waters of the White Clay Creek,” Rep. Pitts said. “In 2000, I led the effort to gain the initial Wild and Scenic Rivers designation for the watershed. Protecting this important resource is a priority for both Pennsylvania and Delaware. I’m glad that we can work together across state and party lines to protect new portions of the White Clay.”

The bill will expand the original designation to include two small stream sections that were omitted from the original Wild and Scenic Rivers designation, including a 1.6-mile stretch of Lamborn Run in Delaware that was originally omitted due to its consideration as an option for a dam to supply drinking water for northern Delaware. It has since been removed from consideration.

“This important piece of legislation will help safeguard one of Delaware’s great outdoor treasures,” Senator Carper said. “Through preserving nine miles of additional segments and tributaries, this bill helps ensure that Delawareans will continue to enjoy White Clay Creek’s natural, cultural and recreational benefits for generations to come. I will work with all of my Congressional colleagues to see to the bill’s timely consideration and passage.”

The bill also includes a 7.4-mile stretch of stream in Pennsylvania's New Garden Township that was originally omitted due to its consideration for a dam. That consideration has since been withdrawn and the Township is now supportive of the designation.

"Protecting the White Clay Creek watershed will not only help protect a vital source of drinking water for thousands of Pennsylvanians, but will also preserve historical and wildlife resources," Senator Casey said. "This bill will further ensure hikers, fishermen and families recreating in the watershed have a pristine environment to enjoy for years to come."

"The White Clay Creek Watershed is more than just a source of drinking water: it contributes to ecosystem and community vitality, improving our quality of life," Representative Carney said. "Long ago, New Castle County affirmed the value of this natural resource and resolved to cooperatively manage it with our friends in Pennsylvania. Extending the federal Wild and Scenic River designation will strengthen these collaborative efforts to help preserve the watershed for generations to come."

In 2000, Congress designated a large majority of White Clay Creek and its tributaries as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Then-Senator Joe Biden (D-Del.) was the lead sponsor for the Senate bill and Representative Mike Castle (R-Del.) was the lead sponsor for the House version. The proposal to expand the designation was led by former Senator Ted Kaufman (D-Del.) in the Senate and Representative Pitts in the House. This marked the first time a whole watershed, rather than individual river segments, had been designated into the system.

The 69,000-acre White Clay Creek watershed is home to 33 species of mammals, 21 species of fish, 27 species of reptiles and amphibians, and over 90 species of birds. White Clay Creek is also stocked with brown and rainbow trout, and is an important resource for fishermen. Protected land in the watershed also provides recreational opportunities for hikers, bikers, birders, hunters, and others. White Clay Creek and the Cockeysville aquifer that lies beneath portions of the watershed are important sources of drinking water for over 128,000 citizens in Pennsylvania and Delaware.

The bill is supported by the White Clay Creek Watershed Management Committee, which is comprised of 40 local, state, and federal agency representatives, as well as organizations and businesses. Among its members is the National Park Service, Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, New Castle County Department of Land Use, London Britain Township, United Water Delaware, White Clay Outfitters, the Brandywine Conservancy, the Delaware Ornithological Society, Stroud Water Research Center, Chester County Planning Division, and SE Regional Office Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources.

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