

Thus, it has been virtually impossible for anyone to come up with an opinion as to the wisdom of the plan. There will always be problems and many cases of hardship when you consider measures of this type, but it seems to me that the problems for our people are magnified.

The Suwannee River was placed in the original bill without consultation and the National Park Service has never been able to tell the people in my district exactly what they can and would do. I am not attempting to find fault but I think it right and proper to point out that the Park Service officials have reportedly made conflicting statements about certain basic portions of the bill.

This was not done from malice or a deliberate attempt to delude anyone, but was rather done because these officials were placing their own interpretation on the bill and acted in what they thought was good faith.

I want to point out that my own relations with the National Park Service have been excellent and they have made a genuine attempt to help me resolve some of the personal problems which this legislation has caused me.

My purpose in testifying is to ask that you not consider any of the proposals which would take the Suwannee River in the active category immediately. There are a number of bills which place it in the study category and this is much more preferable to our people.

The National Park Service earlier this year sent a survey team into the area to survey the stream and they tell me that we should have the benefit of their report about the latter part of May. This will mark the first time that we will have had in writing detailed plans as to what would be done with the river if it should become a part of the Scenic Rivers system.

It should be pointed out that the Suwannee River is almost entirely privately owned, with the exception of very small parcels owned by the State of Florida and a few county governments. I doubt that all of this government owned acreage would exceed one per cent of the area involved.

I urge you not to report out a bill which would include the Suwannee River immediately. This would make a mockery of the good faith efforts of the Governor of Florida and the National Park Service, in full and complete cooperation, to present a detailed plan that our people can consider and give us the benefit of their thoughts as to changes which might need to be made to meet local conditions.

At this point I would like to repeat a portion of the statement I made to the Senate Committee last year:

"Last year several measures were introduced which were termed the 'Wild Rivers Bill.' Unfortunately, none of the authors nor any government agency showed the two Congressmen in Florida through whose districts which the Suwannee River flowed the courtesy of informing them of this action.

I do not question the right of these gentlemen to introduce such legislation, but I feel it would have been more considerate had they informed us of this act, so that we might have better informed ourselves.

That, however, is water over the dam.

The measures which have been presented in the 90th Congress contain the Suwannee River to some extent. Either the Suwannee is to be included at the outset, or it is to be studied for possible inclusion.

When I found out that the bills had been presented to the 89th Congress, I did not grab a 'soap box' and denounce the program, but diligently tried to inform myself. I met with officials of the National Park Service to discuss this program and what could be expected if it should pass.

Since it so directly affected the economy of a large portion of my district in Florida, I asked that a large public hearing be held. At this session many questions came up and much heated debate followed.

It was at this point that I asked that a series of eight meetings be held at a later date, so that the National Park Service could answer the questions which had been posed and which could not be answered at that time in full.

Generally speaking, the people of my section are reasonable men and women. I talked with large numbers of them who said they thought maybe the idea had merit, and wanted to know what could be expected if this legislation passed.

I might point out that there is virtually no Federal land along the Suwannee from the point of its inception in Georgia to the point where it empties into the Gulf of Mexico, after meandering through the northern section of Florida.

I have received a large number of letters both pro and con regarding this measure. Many who have never read the bill demand that we blindly support the