

**STATEMENT OF ARTHUR T. WRIGHT OF THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY
OF WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Mr. WRIGHT. Mr. Chairman, I am Arthur T. Wright of 213 Commonwealth Avenue, Alexandria, and Flint Hill, Va. I am a conservation consultant, and, on this occasion, represent the Wilderness Society whose national headquarters is at 729 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

The Wilderness Society is a national nonprofit conservation organization of approximately 40,000 members, many hundreds of whom are Virginians. The society is engaged in a broad spectrum of conservation education work related to the preservation of American wildland heritage, one aspect of which is to weigh the impact of proposed dams on the land and its people.

The society strenuously opposes the construction of the Salem Church Dam on the Rappahannock River in the State of Virginia. There are many reasons why this committee should not authorize the construction of this dam, including these:

1. Thousands of acres of choice, unspoiled pastoral and semi-wild lands will be irrevocably inundated. Time will prove that the loss of this priceless land will not be compensated for by the water benefits of the dam, especially in view of population growth and the people's need for the land. The State can ill-afford the loss of approximately 28,000 acres of good land to this costly and unnecessary dam. There is no urgent need that a high dam be built in this location now or in the near future, especially when reasonable alternatives are available to meet the area's water needs. Such alternatives include the construction of additional "farm ponds" with floodwater storage and recreational features in the upper basin.

2. Our country cannot continue to disregard the harmful impact upon the land and its people which is so-called economic progress and development projects often have. Lessons of self-discipline and self-restraint in meeting our needs and making our demands upon the land have yet to be learned. Hopefully, we will learn this lesson in time to save our country from virtually complete despoliation. It seems incredible that a fragile, highly perishable resource such as the remaining wild, free-flowing stretches of the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers so near centers of population might not merit the protection they deserve, within a State or National Scenic Rivers Preservation System.

3. The alleged recreational benefits of the dam are very likely overstated, because drawdowns may well occur during periods of potential maximum public use. Recreational benefits also are diminished by the very real loss of important natural river recreational opportunities, such as canoe travel, which exist now.

4. The inundation of the land will destroy for all time a diminishing reserve of productive wildlife habitat—a loss which the State can ill-afford. The significantly important resource has economic, esthetic, and recreational values which should be preserved for the health and well-being of our people.

5. The loss of productive farmland also will be very damaging, especially when it is considered that the crop surpluses of former