



June 23, 2003

The Honorable Ernest F. Hollings
United States Senate
125 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

VIA FACSIMILE

Dear Senator Hollings:

I am writing to give the Coastal Conservation League's full support for the Congaree National Park Act of 2003. The Congaree Swamp National Monument is a tremendous asset for South Carolina and the nation, and has enjoyed ever-increasing numbers of supporters and visitors. It is definitely worthy of the level of protection that a National Park designation would provide.

This area has regional, national, and international significance. Regionally it stores waters that reduce downstream flooding, and improves water quality in the Congaree and Santee rivers. It is important on a national scale because it includes the largest intact tract of old growth area of virgin floodplain forest in the United States. And 20 years ago it earned global recognition as an International Biosphere Reserve. Because of its significance it has attracted visitors ranging from Richland County to around the world.

The expansion of the National Monument area by over 4,000 acres will greatly advance state conservation goals, as it will link two core areas identified by the South Carolina Landscape Mapping Project's Ecological Vision, namely the Congaree Swamp National Monument and the Upper Santee Swamp. In addition, the proposed expansion to include Fork Swamp within the proposed National Park boundaries accomplishes the objective of the Heritage Trust Board of the Department of Natural Resources. This body has recommended protection for Fork Swamp, where the Wateree and Congaree rivers form the headwaters of the Santee River.

The Congaree Swamp is indeed a national treasure that will be enjoyed by visitors from around the country for years to come. The Congaree National Park Act of 2003 is a fitting tribute to its importance. Thank you for all you continue to do to preserve South Carolina's unique natural treasures.

Sincerely

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