

The Great Dismal Swamp National Heritage Area Act

Led by Congressman Donald McEachin and Senator Tim Kaine

Original Cosponsors: Senator Mark Warner and Reps. Elaine Luria, Robert C. “Bobby” Scott, and G. K. Butterfield

Supported by: *Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge; Alliance of National Heritage Areas; National Parks Conservation Association; Virginia Humanities; Virginia Outdoors Foundation; Preservation Virginia; Association for the Study of African American Life and History Hampton Roads Branch; Friends of the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge; The Wilderness Society; Southern Environmental Law Center; The Nature Conservancy; Virginia Wilderness Committee; Archaeological Society of Virginia; Scenic Virginia; National Trust for Historic Preservation; Virginia Native Plant Society; Suffolk-Nansemond Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America; Coalition for American Heritage; Preservation North Carolina; Fairfield Foundation; SouthWings; and The Church of God and Saints of Christ.*



The Great Dismal Swamp National Heritage Area Act directs the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study, in consultation with State and local organizations and governmental agencies, Tribal governments, non-profit organizations, and other appropriate entities, to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating the Dismal and its associated sites as a National Heritage Area. The study would examine a variety of factors, including whether the Dismal has nationally distinctive natural, cultural, and historic resources that tell a regionally unique story, as well as whether there is strong, demonstrated community support for the designation. The Secretary would report the findings of this study to the House Committee on Natural Resources and Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Background:

The Great Dismal Swamp is an area of immense cultural, historic, and environmental importance for Virginia, North Carolina, and the entire nation. The Dismal has served as home for native people and wildlife for thousands of years, and served as a refuge for freedom seekers along the Underground Railroad. Preserving and protecting the Dismal, its wildlife and diverse vegetation, and its rich history and culture is critical. That is why Congressman McEachin and Senator Kaine introduced **The Great Dismal Swamp National Heritage Area Act**.

National Heritage Areas are public-private partnerships designated by Congress for the protection and preservation of resources and stories that are both regionally unique and nationally significant. Through these public-private partnerships, National Heritage Areas support historic preservation, conservation, recreation, tourism, and educational projects.

National Heritage Areas are grassroots, community-driven approaches to economic development and conservation, leveraging federal funds to create jobs and generate revenue for local governments. Almost every National Heritage Area is required to match every federal dollar received with one non-federal source.

National Heritage Areas do not affect private property rights. National Heritage Areas are not units of the National Park Service, and the National Park Service does not assume ownership of land inside the heritage area or impose land use controls. The National Park Service provides technical and limited financial assistance to National Heritage Areas, serving as an advisor and partner to local communities while leaving the decision-making authority in the hands of local communities.

In order for a site to be designated a National Heritage Area, a feasibility study is often conducted to determine whether the site meets the necessary criteria. **The Great Dismal Swamp National Heritage Area Act** would authorize a feasibility study to begin this exploratory process.

If you would like more information about ***The Great Dismal Swamp National Heritage Area Act***, please contact Blair Wriston (Blair.Wriston@mail.house.gov) with Congressman McEachin or Evan McWalters ([Evan McWalters@kaine.senate.gov](mailto:Evan_McWalters@kaine.senate.gov)) with Senator Kaine.