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JOINT RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF THE YORK RIVER AND ITS MAJOR TRIBUTARIES AS A PARTNERSHIP WILD AND SCENIC RIVER IN THE NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS SYSTEM

WHEREAS, the York River, located in southern Maine, with watershed lands in the towns of Eliot, Kittery, South Berwick and York, was evaluated for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System; and

WHEREAS, the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was established in 1968 to protect rivers with outstanding values for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations, and rivers that flow through private lands and are eligible for designation are included in the national system as "partnership" rivers, maintaining all local control of land and river use, subject to existing local and state laws; and

WHEREAS, the York River's water quality, ecological and cultural resources and many outstanding values with national and regional significance make it eligible for Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation; its healthy river habitats and salt marshes support important Gulf of Maine species and improve resilience to climate change impacts; and its vibrant working waterfront contributes to the economy and to community character; and

WHEREAS, the 4 watershed communities strongly support pursuing inclusion of the York River in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System as a partnership river and accepting the York River Watershed Stewardship Plan, as evidenced by affirmative votes by the people of Eliot and York on November 6, 2018 and adoption of resolutions by town councils in Kittery and South Berwick on November 26, 2018 and December 11, 2018, respectively; and

WHEREAS, with the York River being designated as a partnership river, the 4 York River watershed communities will have access to financial and technical assistance from the National Park Service and will be able to proactively and collaboratively address issues and priorities for the benefit of the watershed region, the State of Maine and the Gulf of Maine environment; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That We, the Members of the One Hundred and Twenty-ninth Legislature now assembled in the Second Regular Session, on behalf of the people we represent, take this opportunity to recognize the eligibility and suitability of the York River and its tributaries for designation as a Partnership Wild and Scenic River in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System and acknowledge the strong community support for designation; and be it further

RESOLVED: That We recognize the benefits and opportunities of Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation to better enable watershed communities to work collaboratively to address important river preservation issues for the long-term benefit of current and future generations of Maine citizens.