

# Wild and Scenic River could be a local Moakley legacy

By SUSAN WEINSTEIN  
Gazette Staff Writer

RAYNHAM — A few months before his death, late U.S. Rep. Joseph Moakley said he could not think of another river in the state that "captures the magnificence of New England better than the Taunton River."

One of his final official acts was helping to ensure it stays that way.

Last fall, Moakley secured \$300,000 in federal funds for a three-year Taunton River Wild and Scenic Feasibility Study in the hopes of keeping a 22-mile stretch of the waterway unsullied for future generations.

The third meeting of the study committee he fostered will be held at 7 p.m. tomorrow at Town Hall.

"Our area is under such a strong threat of development. This would offer the additional protection the river needs," said Jim Ross of Raynham, one of two local citizen-at-large members on the committee.

Few rivers in the country have earned a place in the coveted National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

But Ross said the 22-mile stretch of upper Taunton River, from the Taunton/Raynham line to Halifax, is a prime candidate.

The river is not dammed, har-

bors the largest spring herring run in Massachusetts, remains undeveloped and flows past many historical and archeological sites, he said.

If the group is successful, the designation would unlock federal funding, which could lead to the creation of canoe access ramps, land acquisition or the preservation of archeological and historical sites.

The designation must be approved by voters in all five communities which abut the upper Taunton River, including Halifax, Bridgewater, Raynham, Taunton and Middleboro.

The committee consists of four

voting members from each of the towns and members of the Taunton River Stewardship Program.

Bill Napolitano of the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District, serves as the staff liaison funded by the National Park Service.

Ross said the committee welcomes public input, especially the landowners who may be most affected.

On the agenda for tomorrow's meeting are reviews of three prior studies of the river.

The group may consider splitting into subcommittees to study specific issues and would invited public participation.