

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced that he's secured the designation of the Walkway Over the Hudson as a National Recreation Trail (NRT). In response to a request from Hinchey, U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar informed the congressman that he was approving the National Park Service's recommendation and making the scenic pedestrian overpass, which spans the Hudson River from Poughkeepsie to Highland and once served as a railroad bridge, part of the national trail system.

"This designation literally puts the Walkway Over the Hudson on the national map where it will receive the recognition it deserves for providing Hudson Valley residents and visitors with extraordinary recreational opportunities along with beautiful views of the Hudson River," Hinchey said. "With the public opening of the Walkway Over the Hudson less than three weeks away, the timing for a National Recreation Trail designation couldn't be better. I'm grateful for Secretary Salazar's support of this project and am looking forward to the upcoming opening celebration."

The overpass, which opens to the public on October 3, will play a central role in the quadricentennial celebration of Henry Hudson's exploration of the river that now bears his name. Once completed, the bridge will become the world's longest bicycle-pedestrian bridge. The Walkway will also be the nexus of an extensive system of trails on both sides of the Hudson River, in essence, the "knot in the bowtie" of the regional trail system.

On the eastern shore, the Walkway will connect the 12-mile Dutchess Rail Trail that is currently being built between Poughkeepsie and Wappinger's Falls. There are also plans being developed to connect the Walkway to Marist College and Hyde Park's Roosevelt-Vanderbilt historic sites. The Walkway will also connect to the riverfront parks and trails in the City of Poughkeepsie. On the western shore, the Walkway will connect to the existing 4-mile Hudson Valley Rail Trail via a 1-mile link now under construction. Finally, the New York State Department of Transportation regional transportation plan calls for the Hudson Valley trail to link with the existing 12-mile Wallkill Valley Rail Trail. Taken together, these links will create one of nation's premier trail systems as a result of the Walkway Over the Hudson.

National Recreation Trails have been a hallmark of the National Trails System since the first designations in 1971. The NRTs recognize existing trails and trail systems that connect people to local resources and improve their quality of life. NRTs link communities to recreational opportunities on public lands and in local parks across the nation. The designation will help position the Walkway to receive future federal funding.

In a letter informing Hinchey of the decision to designate the Walkway Over the Hudson as a National Recreation Trail, Salazar wrote that "The Hudson River Valley is one of America's most scenic geographic corridors. This bridge will enable thousands of people to enjoy that beauty. The projects' utilization of a noted historic structure for public use and scenic enjoyment will make it an integral part of the National Trails System and provide an excellent opportunity to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's exploration of the Hudson River Valley."

The Walkway Over the Hudson, which used to be known as the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge, is 119 years old and stands 212 feet above the Hudson River. Until recently, the 19th Century structure had received virtually no maintenance or repairs since a 1974 fire ended its use as a railroad bridge. The bridge's rehabilitation project includes the stabilization of the walkway onto the bridge from the western shore of the Hudson River on the Ulster County side and construction of an observation deck.

Hinchey has directly secured \$1.35 million in federal funding for the Walkway Over the Hudson and recently helped announce \$2.4 million in federal economic recovery funding for the bridge. The congressman is also the author of the legislation that created the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area.