

Kingston, NY - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today praised New York Governor David Paterson and legislative leaders in Albany for maintaining the Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council and Conservancy program in their budget. In January, the congressman who is the author of the legislation that created the Greenway, sent a letter warning the governor that cutting the initiative and merging it into the New York Department of State, as was initially proposed, would essentially kill the program, which has benefited communities throughout the Hudson Valley since its inception in 1991. The budget is expected to pass the legislature later this week.

"I am very pleased that Governor Paterson maintained the Greenway in its current, successful form and has provided enough funding that will keep it operating at a successful level," Hinchey said. "I am also especially grateful for the work that Assembly Speaker Silver and Assemblyman Cahill put into protecting the Greenway program, which has had very positive impacts in communities throughout the Hudson Valley. I recognize the difficult budget choices the state is facing and very much appreciate the governor's continued investment in the Greenway, which will help spur economic growth through various recreational and tourist activities throughout the Hudson River Valley."

As a member of the New York State Assembly, Hinchey authored the legislation that created the Greenway with the goal of establishing an innovative program that would empower communities throughout the Hudson Valley to develop and implement plans that would improve their economic circumstances and enhance the quality of life for residents. The program, which has been immensely popular and successful, has utilized a "bottom up" approach to regional planning that combines local participation in planning with state and federal dollars in order to achieve the initiative's goals of protecting the incredible natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources of the Hudson Valley.

After coming to Congress in 1993, Hinchey immediately began to work on federal legislation that would complement and advance the Greenway's goals. In 1996, the congressman secured passage of the legislation he authored that created the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. The purpose of this federal designation was to "recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley for the benefit of the nation." The Greenway, which was already well-established, was designated as the local manager of the Heritage Area program.

The establishment of the new federal program opened up opportunities for federal funding of

Greenway initiatives. Under Hinchey's guidance, Congress has directed millions of dollars to the Heritage Area program, which directly complemented and augmented ongoing state Greenway initiatives. If the Greenway program was eliminated, the state would have very likely lost the steady stream of federal funding it has received from the National Heritage Area program in part because federal rules require that the state or local entities at least equally match the federal share of funding. Without the Greenway in place, it would have almost certainly meant that the local or state match would no longer exist and the \$1 million in annual federal funds the Greenway receives would cease coming into the state. Additionally, the National Park Service, which administers the National Heritage Area program, discourages state agencies from managing such areas and would likely seek to change the management entity away from the state.

The Greenway has played a critical role in promoting and strengthening tourism and agriculture throughout the state. The Communities Council and Conservancy led the creation of the Hudson River Water Trail, organized the annual Hudson River Rambles, and has taken a leadership role in promoting the upcoming quadricentennial celebration. The Greenway's efforts have dramatically improved public access to the Hudson River, upgraded local tourism facilities and amenities, and facilitated the revitalization of long-neglected waterfronts and community centers, which have in turn strengthened the local economy.