

House of Representatives passes Washington-Rochambeau National Historic Trail Legislation.

Bill Advances to the President's Desk

By Kim Burdick

HOUSE OF REPS APPROVES WASHINGTON-ROCHAMBEAU NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL LEGISLATION. LEGISLATION ADVANCES TO PRESIDENT'S DESK

WASHINGTON--U.S. Rep. Mike Castle and U.S. Senator Tom Carper today praised Congressional approval of legislation that would designate a 26 mile stretch of Northern Delaware Roads, a National Historic Trail.

The Washington-Rochambeau National Historic Trail was approved as part of the Omnibus Public Lands Act by a vote of 285-140, clearing the park's final hurdle in Congress and advancing it to President Obama's desk where it is expected to be signed as early as next week. The legislation, cosponsored by all three members of Delaware's Congressional delegation, was initiated in the House by Congressman Maurice Hinchey of New York State, and in the Senate by Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman.

"We have finally done it. Beginning today, the march of the American Revolution's allied French and American troops from Newport, Rhode Island to Yorktown, Virginia will finally be fully recognized for the seminal role it has played in shaping American history. The approval of this Revolutionary War Route by Congress clears the way for President Obama's signature and marks an historic moment for New Castle County and the state of Delaware

A network of historic house museums, state, local and National Parks, archives, tourism offices, state departments of transportation, greenways advocates and libraries and historical societies, as well as private individuals, in Delaware, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, DC and Virginia have been working together since 1998 towards this 225th Anniversary Legacy Project.

The establishment of this unique public-private partnership celebrates the role colonial Americans in the nine states from Rhode Island to Yorktown played in supporting the care and feeding of the troops and their animals as they marched to Virginia to defeat British General Cornwallis. It represents a new opportunity for America to embrace its history, grow its economy through heritage tourism efforts, and educate students and families about American History and the long-time friendship between the United States and France. "The W3R is a wonderful cooperative effort between every day citizens and government agencies on every level. By pulling together as a team, seemingly unrelated sites and historic repositories have heightened the appreciation of 18th century sites throughout the original thirteen colonies. This legislation, recognizing the beauty and history of the route and helping preserve the story of our colonial past for future generations, is a wonderful gift from the present generation to the future." Kim Burdick, National Chairman of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Association said.

The total route covers approximately 685 miles and follows the 18th century Kings Highway through nine states and DC. 26 miles of this route follow Philadelphia Pike from the Claymont/Marcus Hook border to Penny Hill and Brandywine Village to the Wilmington Riverfront; From the Riverfront, the Route follows Maryland Avenue through Newport and Stanton, curving left along Route 7 to Historic Christiana, then down Old Baltimore Pike past Cooch's Bridge to Iron Hill and into Maryland. Related historic sites along the W3R include the Robinson House, the Claymont Stone School which was built on land donated by Patriot John Dickinson after the War; the Penny House; Brandywine Village; 606 Market Street and Lombardy Hall on Concord Pike, which were both owned by Gunning Bedford, Jr., the grave of Dr.

Cappelle at Old Swedes Church; several encampment sites along Maryland Avenue and Newport Pike; Greenbank Mill; the Hale-Byrnes near Stanton; Historic Christiana; Cooch's Bridge and Iron Hill.

In order to ensure the trail is managed from the most local perspective, the legislation creates the Washington-Rochambeau National Historical Trail Advisory Commission to advise the Interior Secretary in the development, implementation and management of the trail. Volunteers from each of the states along the trail will be closely involved in any decisions impacting their part of the route. Local volunteers have been working with their counterparts in other states since 2001 to develop an advocacy network, enhance public visibility of our state's 18th century historic house museums, Revolutionary sites; repositories of related books and primary documents in the Delaware Historical Society, State Archives, and Special Collections, Morris Library, University of Delaware.

In 2004, Delaware's W3R volunteers hosted a "Hike the Pike," in conjunction with the East Coast Greenway. Bikers and hikers were launched from the Robinson House with fife and drums, and speeches by House majority Leader Wayne Smith, and County Councilmen Bob Weiner and John Cartier. The end of the ten-mile hike was a Delaware Greenways meeting at the Delaware Riverfront. History discovery zones with activities and beverages and ice cream were set up along the Philadelphia Pike. The Wilmington Trolley traveled the route that day, offering rides from site to site, to those too tired or too young to walk. It should be noted that the man who walked the fastest was an 80 year old man from Graylyn Crest

In 2006, a 225th Anniversary celebration was held in each state along the route, with Delaware hosting a Revolutionary Weekend which included *Billy Lee's Washington*, a family opera starring C. Lawlor Rogers and written by Evelyn Swensson; open houses at all 18th century sites along the route; lectures and presentations at the Delaware Historical Society; Greenbank Mill, and the Wilmington Riverfront; and a special visit from the French Ambassador who was presented a key to the City by Mayor Baker.

The NPS study which was completed in 2006 noted the exceptional natural, cultural and historic significance of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route, prompting Congress to begin advancing the related National Historic Trail legislation as a legacy project of the 225th Anniversary of the American Revolution. To read this report and view related maps and information, please visit www.w3rus.org

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