



East Coast
Greenway
ALLIANCE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FARMINGTON CANAL HERITAGE TRAIL IN HAMDEN OFFICIALLY DESIGNATED AS PART OF THE EAST COAST GREENWAY

You may think of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail as a place to spend an afternoon or perhaps as a way to travel from one town in central Connecticut to another, but have you ever thought of it as a way to get to Florida or Canada? Visitors to Hamden's section of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail can now get a small glimpse of a very large vision. On March 11th, the 4.7-mile section of Farmington Canal Heritage Trail from Todd Street to Connolly Parkway in Hamden was officially designated as part of the East Coast Greenway, a continuous, 3,000-mile trail that stretches from Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida.

When complete, 44.5 miles of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail, from New Haven to Simsbury, will be a part of the East Coast Greenway (ECG). The trail will attract recreational tourists from cyclists and walkers to wheelchair users and in-line skaters to explore Connecticut's extensive network of trails. The 4.7-mile section through Hamden extends the 5.5 miles already designated from Cheshire to Hamden, creating a continuous 10.2-mile section. Hamden is on track to finish an additional 2.3 miles in late 2007 or early 2008. There are an additional 72 miles already designated as ECG in Connecticut, including the Moosup Valley Trail, the Airline Trail, the Hop River Trail, the Charter Oak Greenway, and additional sections of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail.

In order to be designated as part of the East Coast Greenway, a trail must have a firm surface and be accessible to all kinds of users, including wheelchairs, cyclists, and walkers. The trail also must fit into the bigger picture and have the potential to connect with future neighboring trails to form a continuous route.

Bruce Donald, president of the Farmington Valley Trails Council stated: "Since the first federal dollars were set out in ISTEA in 1991, motivated advocates have worked with individual towns and municipalities to build the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail. It has been a long road, and there is still a lot to do, but we are very excited that the East Coast Greenway has designated another part of the trail in Hamden and we applaud both the town and the Farmington Canal Rail-to-Trail Association for their fine work."

Lisa Fernandez of the Farmington Canal Rail-to-Trail Association says that "This official designation reminds us of the important role CT trails play in building toward a larger vision that stretches all up and down the east coast. Making yet another section of the Farmington Canal

Heritage Trail an official piece of the East Coast Greenway raises awareness for both and helps move us closer to the goal of a continuous unbroken path for healthy commuting and recreation.”

Bill O’Neill, Connecticut State Chair of the East Coast Greenway Alliance, agrees that the designation is critical in raising awareness for connecting trails. “The fantastic work on the Farmington Valley Heritage corridor, both north and south, helps elevate the need to close the gap from Simsbury to Union Station in Hartford,” he said.

Often referred to as an “urban Appalachian Trail”, the ECG passes through 15 states and Washington, D.C., linking cities and towns along the way using urban greenways, park paths, abandoned railroad corridors, waterfront esplanades, and scenic roads. 21% of the route is already completed as traffic-free, firm-surface, off-road trail, while much of the remainder – largely on safe and scenic roads for now – is currently in development. Eventually the entire trail will be off-road, allowing people of all abilities to travel safely from city-to-city, state-to-state, or in their own community without the use of motorized transportation.

The project is spearheaded by the East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA), a non-profit organization based in Wakefield, Rhode Island. While the ECGA itself does not build trail, it supplies vision for connecting local trails and provides strategic assistance for states, counties and municipal jurisdictions that do build trail. The entire route will be publicly owned and operated and free to all to use.

For more information about the East Coast Greenway, please visit: www.greenway.org
For more information about the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail, please visit:
www.farmingtoncanal.org

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