

Castle Unveils Detailed Plan to Create Recreational Area Along Chesapeake and Delaware Canal -- April 21, 2006

NEW CASTLE COUNTY -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle joined the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the State of Delaware, New Castle County and community leaders today along the C & D Canal in Delaware City to unveil the "Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Trail Concept Plan," which was started a year ago, after Castle secured federal dollars for the study.

The purpose of the plan is to recommend how best to increase recreational opportunities along the C & D Canal through the development of a multi-purpose trail, complete with 14 trail heads, comfort stations, picnic areas, parking, improved fishing piers, and information kiosks.

"Almost two years ago I began pushing the idea of expanding the C & D Canal to include more user-friendly recreation. Today marks significant progress in our efforts to enhance recreational opportunities along the C & D Canal for families throughout Delaware, Maryland and the Mid-Atlantic.

"In a time of increased development in the region, the C & D Canal presents us with a unique opportunity -- a piece of federally protected land spanning approximately 9,000 acres that can easily provide additional recreational areas while still providing opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and many other recreational activities. Rather than trying to purchase land to develop such an area, which would be unimaginable with prices what they are today, I have worked with a very broad coalition in both Maryland and Delaware to improve what we already have," Castle said.

Castle delineated the plans for the coming year, saying that the working group will work to complete the pre-design work and environmental impact assessment of the multi-purpose trail. Construction could begin in 2007 with the hope that the trail will be completed in two years' time, subject to funding. Therefore, it is likely that the project will be completed in phases, according to funding levels available at each step.

"What we have before us today is a vital and workable plan, the first fruits of a strong working partnership," said Lt. Col. Robert Ruch, Commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Philadelphia District. "We at the Corps stand ready to do our part in moving forward for the public good."

Delaware Department of Transportation Secretary Carolann Wicks said, "This Plan gives DeIDOT planners the opportunity to funnel future developer-built bicycle and pedestrian facilities into this recreation area. In addition, DeIDOT is absolutely committed to assisting to the design and further planning of this area."

After securing \$150,000 in federal funding in late 2004, Castle established the C & D Canal Working Group, who drafted plans and held public meetings. In addition to U.S. Representative Mike Castle (DE-AL), the working group is comprised of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Representative Wayne Gilchrest; Delaware's Department of Natural

Resources and Environmental Control and Department of Transportation; Maryland's Department of Natural Resources; New Castle County, DE; Cecil County, MD; Delaware City, DE; Chesapeake City, MD; St. Georges, DE; and Delaware Greenways, Inc. The Delaware Department of Transportation, the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, and New Castle County each pledged matching funds in the amount of \$50,000. Additional federal funding in the amount of \$75,000 was secured in 2005 for pre-design work and environmental impact assessment of the multi-purpose trail.