

Historic Highlights in the Work toward Designation

Santa Claus came early for lovers of the Musconetcong River. On December 22, 2006, the President signed into law bill S. 1096, the "Musconetcong Wild and Scenic Rivers Act," which designates portions of the Musconetcong River as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. News of the signing brought excited telephone calls and e-mail messages of congratulations from supporters of the designation from Maine to Alaska.

The bill passed the Senate in December of 2005 and passed the House in July of 2006. The final step, passage of the Senate bill by the House to ensure that identical legislation is recorded in both houses, occurred at 2:00 a.m. on Saturday December 9, just hours before the end of the 109th Congress. The Musconetcong Watershed Association is grateful to Congressman Scott Garrett and his staff for working diligently to achieve this last minute passage. Congressman Garrett sponsored the bill in the House with co-sponsors Congressmen Rodney Frelinghuysen and Mike Ferguson. The Senate bill was introduced by then-Senator Jon S. Corzine and co-sponsored by Senator Frank Lautenberg. The signing of S 1096 makes two separate segments of the Musconetcong River, a total of 24.2 miles, a part of the National Wild and Scenic River System.

In addition to the elected representatives mentioned above, the designation effort, while led by the Musconetcong Watershed Association, could not have occurred without the hard work of citizens, municipal representatives, representatives from each of the four counties, Heritage Conservancy, the National Parks Service, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Division of Watershed Management, Division of Fish and Wildlife, Division of Parks and Forestry and other non-governmental organizations that aided the fifteen year-long process.

See map to view segments that were judged eligible after the 1999-2003 Study. Please note that while Segment C was found eligible, it was not designated because of a lack of support for the designation in Pohatcong Township.

- ◆ Segment A: Saxton Falls to the Rt. 46 Bridge - 3.5 miles, Classification: Scenic;
- ◆ Segment B: Kings Highway Bridge to the railroad tunnels at Musconetcong Gorge - 20.7 miles Classification: Recreational;
- ◆ Segment C: Hughesville Mill to Delaware River confluence - 4.3 miles Classification: Recreational.

Based on demonstrated local support for designating the eligible river segments, support for the goals of the River Management Plan, and adequate river resource protection measures at the state, county and local levels, Musconetcong River segments A and B were deemed suitable for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River system. Segment C was deemed not suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system because of a lack of support in Pohatcong Township. However, because the segment was judged eligible during the study, inclusion of Segment C into the system will be possible if a resolution of support is passed in the future. A complete explanation of eligibility and the rationale behind classification of segments, follow the link to the River Management Plan above.

December 9, 2006

Time to celebrate! Pending the President's signature, 24 miles of the Musconetcong River will become a part of the National Wild and Scenic River System.

Congressman Garrett and his staff were able to have the bill passed in the very last hours before Congress adjourned, saving us a 2007 reintroduction. Details of the significance of this wonderful, exciting, fantastic news will be discussed in a Special Edition of the Musconetcong River News.

The following message was received from Congressman Scott Garrett's aide Andrew Wimer at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday December 9th:

"The senate bill was passed by unanimous consent at 2:00 in the morning last night. You can pop those bottles of champagne and hand out those tee shirts. I'll talk to you on Monday and we'll start coordinating our event with Sec. Kempthorne. Thank you for all the hard work you've put in over the years to make this happen. Have a great weekend."

Summer 2006 Update

(168 and holding...)

On Monday July 24, 2006, the Wild and Scenic Rivers bill (HR 1307) was voted on and passed in the U.S. House of Representatives. The House bill was introduced in 2004 by Congressman Scott Garrett and cosponsored by Congressman Michael Ferguson and Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen. On December 18, 2005, the Senate bill (S 1096) passed unanimously in the Senate. The Senate Bill S1096 was introduced in 2005 by then Senator Jon S. Corzine and cosponsored by Senator Frank Lautenberg.

The bill that was passed in the House will return to the Senate for a "unanimous consent" vote. In this process the House and the Senate confirm that they have passed the identical bill. The bill then receives a new bill number and is then ready for the President's signature. After which, the Musconetcong River will become the 169th member of the National Wild and Scenic River System!

Spring 2006 Update

On March 6, 2006, the Wild and Scenic River bill (HR1307) reintroduced by Congressman Garrett cleared "markup" in the House Resource Committee and was reported on favorably by the Committee. The next step is to get the bill to the floor for a vote by all of the members of Congress. According to an aide to the congressman, "Congressman Garrett ...will continue to work with members and staff to hopefully get the bill the rest of the way through the process as quickly as possible because it remains one of Congressman Garrett's top priorities."

Winter 2005 Update

On December 18th, 2005, bill S1096 to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate portions of the Musconetcong River as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system passed unanimously in the Senate. We are hoping for the same result in the House very soon. The MWA is very optimistic that the river will receive this prestigious recognition in 2006.

Fall 2005 Update: Progress!

In the last edition of the Musconetcong River News it was reported that Senator Jon S. Corzine had introduced a bill in the US Senate to have the Musconetcong designated a Wild and Scenic River. Exciting news followed when the MWA received a phone call to say that the Wild and Scenic bill would be heard before Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Subcommittee on National Parks

in September. It can take a year or more after introduction, to have a bill heard, and this bill had taken only three months.

On September 22nd, 2005 MWA President Bill Leavens, Musconetcong Advisory Committee Chair Susan Dickey, and MWA Executive Director Beth Styler Barry traveled to Washington D.C. Styler Barry appeared as a witness before the Senate Subcommittee and gave testimony in support of bill S1096 to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate portions of the Musconetcong River as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. More good news followed in late October when we received news that the House bill HR 1307 would be heard by the House Committee on Resources, Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands on November 10th. This companion bill had been introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman Scott Garrett in March of 2004.

On this second visit to Washington DC, Leavens, Dickey and Styler Barry were accompanied by MWA Trustee Stuart Shafran (See photo). At the House hearing Susan Dickey, founding MWA member and advocate of the Wild and Scenic effort, appeared as the witness. Passage of the bill cannot occur without hearings in both houses of Congress. For the ongoing W&S efforts, 2005 has been a remarkable year, as several events critical steps in the process have been completed.

Click the links below to read the testimonies given by Senator Jon S. Corzine, Executive Director Beth Styler Barry, Dr. Janet Snyder Mathews, Associate Director for Cultural Resources, National Park Service, Congressman Scott Garrett and Musconetcong Advisory Committee Chair Susan Dickey.