

Michael N. Castle Trail Opens at the C&D Canal

St. Georges – Former Delaware Governor and United States Congressman Michael Castle was the honored guest today as Governor Jack A. Markell joined U.S. Senator Chris Coons, U.S. Congressman John Carney, Deputy Secretary Nicole Majeski, Department of Transportation (DelDOT), and Secretary Collin O'Mara, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) in cutting the ribbon on the new Michael N. Castle Trail on the north bank of the C&D Canal.

The approximately \$6 million Michael N. Castle Trail, which is part of Governor Markell's First State Trails and Pathways Initiative, currently stretches nearly nine miles from the southern end of the Branch Canal west to the Summit Bridge. This scenic stretch along the canal bank is a multi-use pathway designed to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, anglers and equestrians, and will be managed by DNREC's Division of Fish and Wildlife as part of the C&D Canal Conservation Area.

Mike Castle served Delaware for nearly 40 years as a state legislator, lieutenant governor, governor, and U.S. Congressman. While Castle was Governor, the trail was envisioned by the trail user community. Later, while serving in Congress, Castle helped initiate the trail project in 2004, when a group of constituents spoke with him on better ways to utilize the area around the canal. The project was approved and construction of the trail started in mid-2012. When the remaining phases of the Castle Trail are completed, the pathway will extend a full 16 miles from Delaware City to Chesapeake City, Maryland.

"Each time we open a new trail, we are a step closer to our vision of a statewide trails network that will allow residents

and visitors to see Delaware's natural beauty up close, connect local businesses with new visitors, and link our communities," said Governor Markell. "As a cyclist, I look forward to adding the Michael N. Castle Trail to my list of favorite places to ride."

"Mike Castle saw the great potential for the C&D Canal to become a destination for families and nature-lovers in Delaware," U.S. Senator Coons said. "With the completion of the initial phase of the Michael N. Castle Trail, more Delawareans can safely enjoy the outdoor beauty and scenic landscape the canal has to offer. I am thrilled to mark this milestone in the trail's construction and look forward to seeing future phases completed."

"I'm very pleased that after many years of planning and construction, the Mike Castle C&D Canal Trail is finally open to the public," said U.S. Congressman Carney. "This is a beautiful area of our state, and the trail will allow more Delawareans to appreciate it while walking, biking, and enjoying a healthy, active lifestyle. I'm also happy for my predecessor in Congress, Mike Castle. It's fitting that the trail be named for someone who spent so much time and effort working, along with his state director, Jeff Dayton, to help create it. I want to wish him congratulations and thank him for his tremendous work."

"Congressman Castle left a remarkable legacy during four decades of service to the First State. We honor his legacy with a trail that will forever bear his name. He has left Delaware a better place," said DelDOT Deputy Secretary Nicole Majeski.

"Opening this new trail will help support tourism, connect communities, get people outside and help improve their quality of life through healthy activity and enjoyment of nature," said DNREC Secretary Collin O'Mara. "In addition to advancing our plans for a statewide network of trails, the Michael N.

Castle Trail also supports Delaware's Bayshore Initiative in its goal to enhance low-impact outdoor recreation and ecotourism opportunities."

U.S. Senator Tom Carper, who stopped by the trail earlier in the day said, "This trail – which has been years in the making – is a testament to the vision and hard work Congressman Castle had for outdoor recreation in Delaware. We've long waited for this day – a day that bikers, runners, and walkers can enjoy the scenic views along this trail – and I am confident that it will become a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts."

Construction began in September on the next phase of the Castle Trail, the 0.9-mile Branch Canal Pedestrian and Bicyclist Path. When completed in late 2014, the approximately \$1.4 million Branch Canal component will connect the main part of the Castle Trail along the north side of the C&D Canal with Delaware City's Canalfront Promenade. In addition to DelDOT and DNREC, partners involved in this phase also include the New Castle Conservation District and the City of Delaware City.

Governor Markell's First State Trails and Pathways Initiative creates a statewide network of new and enhanced trails and pathways for residents and visitors to enjoy walking, biking, hiking and active living. The initiative has far-reaching advantages – boosting Delaware's economy, benefitting local businesses and promoting the continued growth of the state's recreation and tourism industries. By offering people a place to walk, run, or ride, trails and pathways allow them to connect with the outdoors and encourages healthier, more active lifestyles as well as offering more choices for active transportation.

First State Trails and Pathways Initiative is a partnership led by the [Department of Transportation](#) and the [Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control](#) with regional and

local organization and government partners.

For more information, please visit www.trails.delaware.gov.