

News Release from Congresswoman

Nancy Johnson



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Johnson Environmental Bill Headed to President's Desk

House and Senate Approve Upper Housatonic Valley Heritage Area

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Nancy Johnson today hailed U.S. Senate passage of her bill designating and protecting the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area in Connecticut's Northwest Corner. Johnson thanked U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman for his assistance in passing the bill, which is now on its way to the President to be signed into law.

The Senate passed Johnson's bill, the *Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area Act*, today by unanimous consent. With the House having passed the identical bill on July 24, its next stop is the President's desk.

"Today's victory is great news for the Northwest Corner and for our environment," Johnson said. "Through this locally-led initiative and official designation, we can continue our progress in protecting the Upper Housatonic River Valley and its rich heritage. The valley is a real environmental and historical treasure for Connecticut, and it deserves federal protection. I thank the leadership of Ron Jones, the Heritage Area organization, Senators Lieberman and Dodd, and all those who have worked so hard at the local level to bring us to this great day. The Upper Housatonic Valley will now be protected under federal law."

"This is a wonderful step forward," said Ron Jones, Chairman of the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, Inc. "It's celebrating and preserving our region's natural, cultural, and historical heritage. Great thanks to Nancy Johnson for the job she's done."

Johnson's bill will create a permanent National Heritage Area covering nine towns in Northwestern Connecticut and 20 others in Southwestern Massachusetts. It would make \$1 million in yearly federal grants available to the region through the National Park Service to protect its environment, preserve its unique heritage, and foster its local economy.

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Heritage area/2

The 29 Connecticut and Massachusetts towns included in the proposed National Heritage Area share a unique historical, natural, and cultural experience. Home to many of the nation's earliest iron industries, the first blast furnace was built in 1762 by Ethan Allen and supplied iron for the cannons that helped the Americans win the Revolutionary War. Its five

National Historic Landmarks include homes of American writers Edith Wharton, Herman Melville and W.E.B. DuBois. In addition, the area includes four National Natural Landmarks.

The region has already organized heritage activities including an Iron Heritage Trail brochure, a graduate course for local teachers on the area, and summer arts festivals.

The nine Connecticut towns proposed for the Heritage Area are Salisbury, North Canaan, Canaan, Norfolk, Cornwall, Sharon, Kent, and Warren in the Fifth Congressional District, and Colebrook in the First Congressional District.

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