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Pa. DCNR Joins in Opening Celebration at Sunbury River Front Park



SUNBURY, Pa., Aug. 16, 2012 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources today celebrated the long-awaited opening of a river-front project in Sunbury, Northumberland County that offers better public access to the Susquehanna River, enhancing recreation and tourism opportunities.

"DCNR is proud to celebrate not only the completion of an enhanced gateway to the river, but also the health, social, and economic benefits that this project will bring," said Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Deputy Secretary John Giordano.

"Like many of our projects across Pennsylvania, this vision hits the triple bottom line -- improving environmental quality, neighborhood economic value and the community's social fabric. Our support of this project is a sound investment that will also benefit future generations."

Today's event, hailed as the "Grand Opening of the City of Sunbury's River Front Park and Amphitheater," was focused on extensive improvements at Front and Chestnut streets that include:

A new boat dock; permanent stage; extensive paving work facilitating ADA-compliant walking trails and connecting ramps; extensive lighting; gardens and other landscaping; and more than 300 yards of floodwalls offering protection to the city and its recreation area.

Through its Community Conservation Partnership Program, DCNR funded \$567,000 toward the project's total \$11 million cost.

"DCNR's support of recreational and aesthetic improvements such as these go far beyond financial backing," Giordano added. "Our goal in towns and cities across the state is to reconnect Pennsylvanians to all the opportunities our rebounding waterways have to offer."

In the Sunbury region -- marked by the damming of the Susquehanna and creation of Lake Augusta at nearby Shikellamy State Park -- DCNR has funded and/or assisted the Susquehanna River Greenway Partnership; Lake Augusta Gateway Corridor Study; and the recently completed Community River Sports Park Feasibility Study.

"This project gives the residents and visitors to Sunbury and the Susquehanna Valley a beautiful place to enjoy the river," said Sunbury City Councilman Jim Eister, who oversaw the improvement project. "Everybody who comes down to the improved riverfront area says they will be back."

"We had so many funding partners and I want to thank them all," said Eister. "The City of Sunbury could not have implemented this project without them."

In a March 2011 letter to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar regarding the establishment of the Susquehanna River Connecting Trail, which connects with the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, Governor Tom Corbett noted the Susquehanna's "great potential to integrate both economic development and recreational objectives in a way that protects our vital cultural heritage."

With the trail designation, the National Park Service has pledged to work closely with state and local agencies and other partners to provide technical and financial assistance, resource management, facility enhancement, interpretive trail route marking and promotion along the connecting trails.

"Partnership is what it takes to turn vision into reality and make projects like this come to fruition," said Giordano. "We look forward to this latest endeavor of federal, state and local partnership that has helped shine a most deserving national spotlight on both Sunbury and the Susquehanna."

Besides DCNR, support for the Sunbury project came from: the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program; Department of Community and Economic Development; Department of Environmental Protection; Economic Development Initiative/Housing and Urban Development; Department of Transportation; Federal Highways Administration; Fish and Boat Commission; and Sunbury City.

Visit the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources online at www.dcnr.state.pa.us.

Media contact: Terry Brady, 717-772-9101

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