

**CONGRESSMAN CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 1528
THE NEW ENGLAND NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL DESIGNATION ACT
THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FOREST AND PUBLIC LANDS
MAY 15, 2007**

Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop, and Members of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forest and Public Lands, thank you for the chance to speak before you this morning. I am here to speak in strong support of H.R. 1528, the New England National Scenic Trail Designation Act. This legislation would designate the Metacomet Monadnock Matabessett Trail as a national scenic trail, under the National Trails System Act of 1968.

Under the National Trails System Act, National Scenic Trails must provide “maximum outdoor recreation potential, and conservation and enjoyment of nationally significant, historic, natural, or cultural qualities.” The Metacomet Monadnock Matabessett trail, or the triple M trail, meets and exceeds all of these requirements. The trail runs through the heart of Connecticut and Massachusetts, containing some of the most spectacular vistas

and landscapes in New England. I am privileged to represent several towns along the trail, and my constituents have told me time and time again how much they enjoy hiking on the MMM.

As you all know, one of the criteria in designating a National Scenic Trail is its proximity to urban centers with large populations. Over two million people live within ten miles of the MMM trail – and it is that accessibility that makes this such a wonderful recreational opportunity for the people of Connecticut and Massachusetts.

A trail so close to so many people offers a chance for families to enjoy healthy, outdoor, recreational activity. It gives families the opportunity to escape the lure of video games and television and will encourage families and children to get active. This is crucial as childhood obesity and other health problems related to inactivity continue to rise. If we can instill in our children a passion for the environment and the outdoors while they're young, they will carry it with them for the rest of their

lives. By designating the MMM as a National Scenic Trail we can ensure that it will be around for young people to enjoy for years to come.

The MMM trail cuts right through the heart of the Outer-Hartford suburbs – an area called the Farmington Valley in my district. People who live there want to get away from the hustle and bustle of Hartford and enjoy Connecticut’s natural beauty. The residents of the Farmington Valley already take advantage of the MMM trail. I am confident that designating MMM as a National Scenic Trail, will bring additional publicity and organizational tools that will entice even more people to come and appreciate this unique part of Connecticut.

In addition, the trail also runs through parts of New Britain and Meriden, two of the larger towns in my district which have seen the heydays of large manufacturing plants come and go. These two cities that are redefining themselves in this new century,

and the trail provides an easy path to the outdoors and wilderness that one wouldn't expect to find so close to an old mill town.

Keeping access to these scenic vistas and open spaces is one of my top priorities, and an issue my constituents care deeply about. As the new Chairman of the Land Conservation Caucus, I look forward to becoming a strong advocate here in Congress for land preservation and open space.

Assuring that this trail is maintained and sustained for future generations to enjoy will add to and enhance the special qualities in the Fifth district. It will create an incentive for businesses and families to reside on the 5th District. The New England Scenic Trail would be only the 9th national scenic trail in the country, a designation that would convey the importance and significance of these special historical and scenic areas.

This trail is maintained solely by local community volunteers, which ensures a sense of pride and ownership over the

MMM. This designation, should it pass, will only enhance that sense of pride.

I am extremely proud to be here today in support of legislation that will have such a profound and positive impact on my district. I hope you will join me today in supporting H.R. 1528. I thank the subcommittee again for allowing me to speak here today.