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# C&D Canal project has money to get started

Castle says \$4.6 million is available for recreation trail

By *BETH MILLER, The News Journal*

Posted Wednesday, August 23, 2006

Not long after the dignitaries cleared out Tuesday morning, brothers Ryan and Jared Kukawski, ages 9 and 6, respectively, walked down the gravel road along the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal under the Reedy Point Bridge.

They had yellow plastic shovels and a plastic bag with a few fossils -- including the state fossil, belemnite -- they had found in a sandy pile just off the road. They had come from Middletown with their parents, Don and Jennifer, to spend a day together before school starts and schedules get crazier.

"It was really fun," Jennifer said.

And it was just the kind of excursion officials hope will become more common when the \$19 million project creating the C&D Canal Recreation Trail is complete.

The Kukawski family had trouble finding the gravel road at first -- no signs point visitors to it -- but they eventually found it and parked in a little pull-off. They hiked past the microphones and cameras and on to the fossil site just a few minutes before Rep. Mike Castle arrived to announce that \$4.6 million was available to kick-start the 2-year-old trail project.

"Virtually 100 percent of the state has driven over it, but probably less than 1 percent has been down here," Castle said later. "You have to be a Boy Scout to find it. There are no signs, there is no parking, there are no restrooms. People don't know if it's public property or private property and they're a little nervous about it.

"We want to make it more accessible. ... It's like a jewel ready to be shined up."

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U.S. Rep. Mike Castle announces Tuesday the raising of \$4.6 million for the first phase of the planned C&D Canal Recreation Trail along the canal under the Reedy Point Bridge outside Delaware City. ([Buy photo](#))

The News Journal/ROBERT CRAIG



An artist's rendering shows skaters, bicyclists and horseback riders using the planned C&D Canal Recreation Trail.

Andropogon Associates Ltd.

## A long process

Castle has been working the idea for about two years with members of Delaware Greenways, the Army Corps of Engineers -- which has authority over the canal and the 9,000 acres included in the trail plan -- his Republican colleague in Congress, Maryland Rep. Wayne Gilchrest, state transportation officials, representatives of New Castle and Cecil counties, Delaware and Maryland environmental departments, and Delaware City, St. Georges and Chesapeake City, Md., officials.

A similar -- but much smaller -- project is in place already along the Cape Cod Canal in Massachusetts, where visitors can hike, bike, attend nature seminars or learn about the traffic using that 7-mile canal.

This project, if fully built, would create 29 miles of trails on both sides of the canal, including repairs or replacements for 10 fishing piers, trail markers and restrooms. New access gates would be part of the package, and motor vehicle use of the area would be limited to emergency and official vehicles.

On a day like Tuesday, with sunshine on the water and low humidity in the air, it was hard to imagine the canal banks as crime scenes, but they have been demeaned that way many times.

Decomposing bodies have been found, people have been shot, all manner of old appliances have been dumped, and no one knows what all has happened on the remote roads and trails that stretch along the canal and branch off into underbrush.

Ernest A. Shepard, who lives on the north side of the canal and serves on the Chesapeake City town council, has seen plenty of trouble and believes the trail will bring much of it to an end.

"You know when you see them driving after dusk they're up to no good," Shepard said. "There's nothing to see down here after dark. They're either here for drugs or drinking parties. And there's so little law enforcement. ... That will change."

The money collected so far -- about \$1.3 million of it in fines imposed on the Delaware City oil refinery when Motiva owned it -- is about half the cost of Phase 1, which would build 16 miles of trail on the north side of the canal from Delaware City to Chesapeake City.

Delaware's share of this early money is \$2.9 million. The federal money -- \$1.7 million -- has been approved as part of the \$139.6 billion House Transportation Act, which still must be reconciled with the U.S. Senate's transportation budget, a move Castle and his aides believe is likely. Castle staffer Jeffrey Dayton said the hope is that construction will begin sometime in 2007.

The project is a bargain for taxpayers, residents, tourists -- all of whom will have greater access to land the public already owns, Castle said.

"If you wanted to buy 9,000 acres of land in New Castle County, what would the price be?"

Castle said. "This will open the area up to thousands of people a month. ... Everybody ought to be able to enjoy it."

### A home for wildlife

The area is home to much wildlife -- quail, box turtles, deer, migratory ducks and geese, to name a sampling.

"This is an important corridor for many species to move across the state," said Rob Hossler, program manager for the state Division of Fish & Wildlife. "There are not many places that have long corridors with water and habitat on both sides.

Any kind of development in such areas raises concern about disturbing that wildlife.

"We had some people really concerned about a change in the tranquility of the area," said John Hughes, secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control. "But my answer to that is: This area isn't all that tranquil. We've discovered television sets and refrigerators. We can't keep ahead of it. But we will be able to when we have a handle on this project. ... We've learned from the parks that the type of people who use facilities like this are the kind you want here. They solve problems. They take their litter out with them."

The terraced terrain around the canal will allow hunting and jogging to take place at the same time, Hughes said. Horseback riding, dog training, fishing all will continue.

But it won't be pristine territory.

"This is still a disposal site," Hughes said. "They still have to dredge the canal. We're not going to make this an environmental paradise. But the use of it -- a long, long hiking, biking path -- is rare."

Contact Beth Miller at 324-2784 or [bmiller@delawareonline.com](mailto:bmiller@delawareonline.com).

## STORYCHAT

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Posted: Thu Aug 24, 2006 7:15 am

Fix the bridge first.....

I fished Lums 40 years or so back.....  
The areas were secluded off rt. 71 and fishing was great.....only way to get back here was thru the main entrance and boat.

The dog trainers had the back by the old boat ramp.....motors only 7.5 horsepower were permitted.

Once you motored past the swimming area to the left was uninhabited woods and water.....you could lay back in your boat and listen to the sounds of

the wind-water-woods.

The swimming area was an old dumping ground for the Corps when they widened the Canal... on rainy days the water would stir up the sand dumped on top of the sludge and it would stink around the swimming area only.

When the State spent 5 million dollars ruining the area put in camping area that destroyed the peace and solitude of Lums gotten to only by boat.....

Your previous post about kissing up to mike castle is what I refer to as BS.....so childish.....I promise to ride up and down the canal if you fix it 3 times/week.....

watch out for pieces of bridge falling from above when pedaling under the old St. George's Bridge and watch when the new 301 is built that your home isn't condemned for the new 6 lane highway coming thru.....

How about the new route 1 and 95 interchange by Christiana Mall known as the Castle-Acierno and Justice interchange.....Acierno made millions as the road catered to his businesses-mike went to Washington- and Kermit went to Jail.....by the way what's mike's wife's maiden name?.....Italian Construction Company.

The announcement comes during election time.....what a coincidence?

**Posted: Thu Aug 24, 2006 6:23 am**

What a sourpuss you are mike sher...

Lums Pond is a thousand times better as a state park than it ever was undeveloped. Go down to the canal like I do on a regular basis- all the illegally dumped trash and filth used to be around Lums. With a developed canal area, all the pigs who dump their trash will have to find another place.

Go to Montana if you don't like development- there's plenty of undeveloped land out there. You live in a heavily populated area that is growing- we need parks and other projects like this. Would you rather have Wilkinson and Toll Brothers down there building waterfront McMansions? Because if you seriously think that that land is going to stay undeveloped for eternity, you are delusional. The Corps of Engineers needs money too, and it would take a simple penstroke in Washington to make that area available to the highest bidder.

**Posted: Wed Aug 23, 2006 10:03 pm**

The last post is pure BS.....

Look @ Lums Pond after the State got ahold of it..... they ruined it.

The poster must be a friend of Kermit's and Acierno's..... what a waste.

**Posted: Wed Aug 23, 2006 8:15 pm**

Having travelled to Valley Forge, Kent Island, Baltimore and other places in the region specifically for the purpose of riding my bike on their beautiful, well-maintained multi-use trails, I vigorously applaud this project.

And as a lifelong resident of this state, I salute Mike Castle for getting this project going (although I'm sure there are others who also deserve a lot of credit just for getting the idea to him)--it is so long overdue. After I read the article this morning, I went down to St. Georges with my bike and rode all the way to both east and west dead ends. It was fantastic. If I lived in any of the towns along the canal, I'd be jumping for joy.

OK, we get it, Summit Bridge is in terrible shape, but what does that have to do with this project? I manage to get over it, and I travel that bridge often enough to be inconvenienced, but there are alternatives. And to those who insist on driving their cars and motorcycles down to the canal to go fishing and sit on the broken, run-down piers, sorry for your luck. It won't kill you to park your car and walk.

Mike Castle, thank you. I promise I'll use the park 3 times a week, and I won't litter, rob people, deal drugs or let my dog poop in the middle of the pavement. If you make it a state park, I'll even pay the fee and perhaps even get a season pass, and I'll join a "friends of the trail" committee to help maintain it, and I'll tell my out-of-state family and friends about it and bring them here when they visit. I will get everything out of this area that it is designed for and more.

**Posted: Wed Aug 23, 2006 5:30 pm**

I've got mixed feelings on this whole project. I love the canal the way it is, for the peace and quiet, and for the distance from the rest of Delaware. I do, however, think it would be a great recreational area in the eyes of the general public. A family day at the park isn't fit for the area right now as it is, but the canal has great potential to be fit for family outings. I think the entire development is a bit too much, though. In my opinion, the entire stretch of the north portion of the canal could be used for development, while the south end could remain as it is, or vice-versa. I'd love to still be able to sit on a pier with my fishing pole and a friend and enjoy the canal for what it is right now, without thousands of people, and apparently horses, running around.

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