

**Lackawanna Heritage Valley National and State Heritage Area**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**THE LACKAWANNA HERITAGE VALLEY BEGINS CONSTRUCTION ON THE SCRANTON TO TAYLOR SECTION OF THE LACKAWANNA RIVER HERITAGE TRAIL**

Scranton, PA (May 15, 2012) – On May 14, the Lackawanna Heritage Valley National and State Heritage Area (LHV) broke ground on the newest section of the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail. The two-mile trail section will use an abandoned rail bed from West Elm Street in Scranton to Keyser Creek in Taylor Borough. The groundbreaking ceremony was held at the trailhead on West Elm Street.

Several officials spoke at the event, including Richard J. Allan, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Senator John Blake (D-22), Lackawanna County Commissioners Jim Wansacz, Patrick O'Malley, and Corey O'Brien, Robert Savakinus, Chairman of the Board for the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority, and Natalie Gelb, Executive Director of the Lackawanna Heritage Valley. The officials all noted the trail's many potential benefits. This includes a providing a venue for both fitness and recreational activities for residents, offering a safe alternative transportation route for students and commuters, and creating a long-term economic benefit to the local communities.

The \$2 million project will extend the existing multi-purpose trail that runs from Olive Street to West Elm Street in Scranton. Construction is anticipated to be completed by late fall 2012.

"The Scranton to Taylor trail section is a key element in the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail system," noted Ms. Gelb. "It helps the Lackawanna Heritage Valley address its goal of connecting people and communities to the Lackawanna River."

The new trail will create an eight mile contiguous pedestrian and bicycle path from Market Street in Scranton to Taylor Borough. It will be the first trail in the region to have a dual pathway - a 10 foot wide paved path adjacent to a 6 foot wide packed stone dust path. The paved portion of the trail is suitable for bicyclists, families with strollers, and wheelchair users. The stone dust pathway offers a comfortable surface for walkers, runners, and dog walkers. The trail will feature several scenic overlooks of the Lackawanna River. In addition, a pedestrian island will be installed on West Elm Street to help trail users safely cross the busy roadway.

The Lackawanna River Heritage Trail system encompasses the Delaware and Hudson (D&H) Rail-Trail to form a 70+ mile trail system from the New York State border to the Susquehanna River in Pittston, Pennsylvania. The trail has 18 miles currently open to the public. The trail is popular with walkers, runners, bicyclists, cross country skiers, snowmobilers, and equestrians. In addition to the latest project, more than 11 miles of new trail are anticipated for construction within the next year. LHV develops and manages the trail system from Vandling south through the Lackawanna Valley. The Rail-Trail Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania is responsible for the D&H Rail-Trail to the north.

The Scranton to Taylor Trail project has been funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation through the Federal Transportation Enhancements Program, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' (DCNR) Community Conservation Partnership Program (C2P2), the Lackawanna County Commissioners through the County Environmental Initiative that was funded by the Growing Greener Bond Fund administered by DCNR, the Lackawanna Environmental Conservation and Outdoor Recreation (LECOR) Partnership Program through Lackawanna County, and the National Park Service. The Borough of Taylor also provided funding through the Pennsylvania Gaming Local Share Account program of the Department of Community and Economic Development.

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