



May 27, 2021

SEPTEMBER 11TH  
NATIONAL MEMORIAL  
TRAIL ALLIANCE®

The Honorable Joe Neguse  
Chair  
Subcommittee on National Parks,  
Forests, and Public Lands  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1328 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Russ Fulcher  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on National Parks,  
Forests, and Public Lands  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1328 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher, and Subcommittee Members:

September 11, 2021 will be the twentieth anniversary of that horrendous attack on our country which claimed the lives of thousands of American heroes. To ensure that the memory of that fateful day is never lost, Congressmen Connolly, Fitzpatrick and Beyer have introduced H.R. 2278 which provides for federal designation of the September 11<sup>th</sup> National Memorial Trail as part of our National Park Service's national trail system. We would be honored if your subcommittee would support this important legislation, especially as it provides outstanding economic, tourism, recreational and health benefits to so many communities and constituents. It is a Trail of Remembrance for current and future generations.

In 2002 the September 11<sup>th</sup> National Memorial Trail Alliance was formed to develop an unbroken 1,300-mile multipurpose system of roads, trails, and greenways connecting the three national 9/11 memorials at the National September 11 Memorial & Museum in New York City, the Flight 93 National Memorial in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, and the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial in Arlington, Virginia. Last year the September 11<sup>th</sup> National Memorial Trail was honored with the passage of Senate Resolution 267.

The 9/11 National Memorial Trail honors those who were lost and celebrates our resilience and perseverance as a country, our majestic landscapes, and our historical, cultural, and industrial heritage. It extends through six states (Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia) and the District of Columbia. Along the way, travelers can connect with communities and their historic, industrial, and cultural points of interest. More than 50% of the route is currently off-road.

CONNECTING THE TRAILS ★ THAT CONNECT US ALL

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Congressman Connolly has patterned this bill after an outstanding example of existing legislation. The Women's Rights National Historical Park is located in Seneca Falls, New York. On March 30, 2009 H.R. 146, the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 was enacted as Public Law 111-11. Title VII, Subtitle B, Section 7111 established the Votes for Women History Trail Route. According to the National Park Service, "Under this legislation, the Secretary, with concurrence of the agency having jurisdiction over the relevant roads, may designate a vehicular route, to be known as the "Votes for Women History Trail Route", to link properties in the State [NY] that are historically and thematically associated with the struggle for women's suffrage in the United States."

The Women's Rights National Historical Park serves as the "mother ship" for the Votes for Women Historical Trail. The identical structure would be utilized with the Flight 93 National Memorial in Somerset County, Pennsylvania serving the same role for the September 11<sup>th</sup> National Memorial Trail. The costs and administration would be extremely low, and the current staff of the Flight 93 National Memorial are equipped and ready to support this mission. As you know, the Flight 93 National Memorial is the only National Park Service site honoring the memories of those heroes on 9/11/2001. The other non-National Park Service sites are the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial, and the National September 11 Memorial & Museum in New York City.

To be very clear, this structure would ensure that the National Park Service would NOT be responsible for the maintenance, management and development costs of a 1,300-mile multi-state trail and greenway. That responsibility continues with the current partnership of states, localities, non-profit organizations, the September 11<sup>th</sup> National Memorial Trail Alliance and others.

The professional National Park Service management of the Flight 93 National Memorial is uniquely equipped to oversee this responsibility. The NPS management responsible for the Flight 93 Memorial also supervises two additional NPS sites close by that are on the 9/11 Memorial Trail path; the Johnstown Flood National Memorial and the Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site. Many other NPS sites (far too many to list) are along the trail route including Gettysburg National Military Park, Valley Forge, Morristown National Historical Park, and the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary National Historical Trail.



An excellent example of this existing partnership can be found in Pennsylvania. When the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was introduced to the vision of a national memorial trail across the state, then Governor Edward Rendell lent the state's full support. That was followed by partnership with Somerset County and its connection with the 150-mile Great Allegheny Passage. There is a distance of approximately 21 miles between the Flight 93 National Memorial and the Great Allegheny Passage, which is part of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.

In 2015, the CSX Corporation, under the leadership of chairman and chief executive officer Michael Ward, donated approximately 12 miles of abandoned rail corridor to the Alliance, and the Somerset County. Chairman Ward noted, "CSX is honored to make this contribution to the September 11<sup>th</sup> National Memorial Alliance, helping to build the connection between these three important historic sites. Just as we connect America's businesses and consumers in support of the nation's prosperity, we're pleased to have a role in building the network of trails that will link these memorials to the heroes of September 11<sup>th</sup>." This corridor is a vital segment connecting from the Great Allegheny Passage to the borough of Berlin, which is half way to the Flight 93 National Memorial.

With strong support, federal, state and local efforts joined to construct the first section of conversion of this abandoned rail corridor to become a beautiful rail-to-trail. The ribbon cutting of the first section of completed trail took place on April 30, 2021. When the full 21 miles of off-road trail is completed, one will be able to walk, hike or cycle from the Flight 93 National Memorial to the Great Allegheny Passage, then south to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park at Cumberland, Maryland continuing south to the south terminus at Georgetown, then across the Potomac River using the Mt. Vernon Trail to the 9/11 National Pentagon Memorial.

As noted in H.R. 2287, The September 11<sup>th</sup> National Memorial Trail forms an unbroken triangular trail of approximately 1,300 miles as follows:

- (A) Starting at the Pentagon Memorial in Arlington, Virginia following the Mt. Vernon Trail;
- (B) then extending north along the 184-mile Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park where it connects at Cumberland, Maryland with the 150-mile Great Allegheny Passage and follows to Garrett in Somerset County, Pennsylvania;

(C) turning northeast and continuing for approximately 21 miles to the Flight 93 National Memorial;

(D) continuing east through the communities and historic sights of Pennsylvania, until arriving at New Jersey's 130-mile Liberty Water Gap Trail, then follows to New York City and continues to the National September 11 Memorial and Museum;

(E) returning south following important sections of the East Coast Greenway and connecting Pennsylvania's 9-11 Memorial Garden of Reflection to the Trail;

(F) continuing through New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and the District of Columbia; and

(G) ending at the Pentagon Memorial.

The September 11<sup>th</sup> National Memorial Alliance continues to work collaboratively with many stakeholders to develop and maintain an accurate and detailed interactive map on our website [911trail.org](http://911trail.org), under the "Visit the Trail" tab. This map utilizes ESRI GIS Software with the ability to zoom to a level to show turn-by-turn directions of any part of the trail over the entire 1,300-mile alignment. The organization also utilizes an ESRI Photo Tour Map to show the location of important historical monuments and other strategic points of interest on the trail, along with specific details about each location.

During this time of COVID-19 restrictions, the Trail's recreational use and health benefits have never been so extensively used. But it is also a trail of economic development and tourism promoting especially those underserved communities along its 1,300-mile route. It is a Trail of Remembrance.

Users of all types are experiencing the trail now. Some are doing day hikes or cycling along specific sections of the 9/11 National Memorial Trail. Others are taking multi-days trips seeing the many attractions along the way, which helps boost local economies. Still others have cycled the entire route. With a companion motoring route, it is easy to visit the Valley Forge National Historical Park, the Empty Sky Memorial at New Jersey's Liberty State Park, the Antietam National Battlefield in Maryland, or the United States Capitol.

Others are comparing the potential of the 9/11 National Memorial Trail to Europe's centuries-old Camino de Santiago, also referred to as the Way of St. James, with trails throughout Europe converging at Spain's cathedral in Santiago de Compostela. This is a pilgrimage trail ending where the supposed remains of St. James are enshrined.

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In the May 2015 *National Geographic* edition, an article stated that, "When I walked the Way, I became part of an ancient tradition thriving in a modern world. Though the pilgrimage is rooted in Christian tradition, it has been reborn as a nondenominational spiritual rite." It is also a tourist boon for Spain; just as the 9/11 National Memorial Trail can be for the United States.

As trekkers follow the 9/11 National Memorial Trail, they will be able to reflect on the meaning of being an American, seeing firsthand the resilience of a nation from the time of our country's founding to present-day. They will visit the sites of the Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and the Civil War. They will experience the building of America from small towns to industrial giants, and appreciate the scenic and recreational beauty that abounds. Most importantly, there will be a living trail to ensure that the life sacrifices made by Americans throughout history, and the heroes on September 11, 2001 are forever remembered.

We are urging, under your leadership, that this legislation be enacted by September 11, 2021 as a National Park Service designated trail honoring all of the heroes of "9/11" and those who wrote the story of our country's perseverance, resilience and freedom since its founding. With the passing of two decades, many of our younger population know very little of the events of that fateful day. The story must remain strong. "Lest We Forget."

Thank you for your consideration of this request. The board and members of the September 11<sup>th</sup> National Memorial Trail Alliance would be pleased to provide any additional information you require, or to meet with you and your staff regarding this very important request.

Sincerely,

David G. Brickley  
Founder/President Emeritus

Attachments

cc: The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly  
September 11<sup>th</sup> National Memorial Trail Alliance Board of Directors