

CAPITAL REGION

Mohawk Towpath: Another step taken

26-mile byway achieves national status, 1 of 3 routes in state with designation

BY PAM ALLEN
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The 26-mile Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway has become one of America's Byways.

Designation of the historic roadway was made Thursday in Washington, D.C., by the National Scenic Byways Program, which is sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration.

The byway runs from Waterford to Schenectady, and follows the old Erie Canal along the Mohawk River. It was designated as part of New York's Scenic Byways system in 2003.

It joins only two other byways in the state, the Seaway Trail and Lakes to Locks Passage, in carrying the national designation.

The designation is part of nationwide effort to "encourage people to get out and enjoy outdoors, get off the interstate and take a more casual look at America's highways," said Eric Hamilton of Clifton Park, who was in Washington Thursday to accept the honor on behalf of the Mohawk Towpath Byway Coalition.

"It's awesome to represent so many people that made it possible, and know that designation came about as the result of communities working together," he said.

Hamilton, who is chairman of the coalition, said presenters used a quote from the group's applica-

tion to outline how the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway played a significant role in the country's early development.

The Mohawk Towpath Scenic byway joins the Seaway Trail and Lakes to Locks Passage as being the only highways in New York to receive the national designation.

As part of the recognition, way-faring signs will be erected along the route next spring, Hamilton said.

"We're thrilled. The byway is very important to the state program," said Mark Woods, coordinator of New York Scenic Byways.

Woods, who also attended Thursday's ceremony, said the Mohawk Towpath is a critical link connecting the east-west Lakes to Lock Passage and the Revolutionary War Scenic Byway, which runs north and south.

The national recognition will open the door to federal grants, as well as provide exposure through brochures, maps and Web sites, Woods said.

Forty-five of the 57 applications submitted were recognized with various national designations, Hamilton said. The Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway was the only highway in New York state recognized at the ceremony.

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