

**RE: H.R. 799/S. 403 – The North Country National Scenic Trail Route Adjustment Act**

Dear Member of Congress,

We strongly support H.R. 799/S. 403, the North Country National Scenic Trail Route Adjustment Act, and encourage you to support the passage of this bill as well as to co-sponsor this important piece of legislation.

The North Country National Scenic Trail is the longest of all the National Scenic Trails, passing through seven states, from New York to North Dakota. The Trail passes near big cities and through backcountry wilderness, providing a “close-to-home” park for millions of Americans, offering healthy, active recreation options for families, Scouts, and people of all walks of life.

The North Country National Scenic Trail is an outstanding example of how a public/private partnership can serve to meet outdoor recreation needs and provide local economic benefits. For each federal dollar invested, the volunteers of the North Country Trail Association return almost \$6 in both sweat equity and hard dollar contributions to build and protect this simple legacy trail for all Americans, today and for the future.

H.R.799/S.403 addresses obstacles encountered with a 100-mile section in Minnesota that was revealed to contain extensive wetlands. The proposed re-route, while 500 miles in length, uses approximately 400 miles of existing trail and so still only requires the same amount of trail construction. Best of all, due to its more upland nature, the re-routed trail will cost far less to build and maintain than the originally authorized route.

Additionally, this bill would extend the Trail an additional 40 miles, to connect with the Appalachian Trail, from its current eastern terminus at the New York-Vermont border. Connecting these iconic trails is certainly what Congress had in mind when establishing the National Trails System and would be celebrated by all Americans who enjoy outdoor recreation.

These adjustments are supported by the local towns and counties, the National Park Service which administers the Trail, and – importantly – by the hard-working volunteers who will turn this vision into a reality.

Trail recreation activities accounted for \$81 billion of total annual spending in 2012 per an Outdoor Industry Association study, and much of this spending takes place in small communities along the trails, communities for which this income is substantial and meaningful. Successfully advancing these trails through connectivity and necessary route adjustments, will pay dividends for generations and help numerous family-owned small businesses. The North Country Trail Association’s “Trail Towns” program helps these often rural communities leverage the Trail for greater local and regional economic benefits.

We fully support advancing the Trail’s completion with these small but important route adjustments and urge your support of the North Country National Scenic Trail Route Adjustment Act.