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From Hudson Valley to Hall of Fame

Fans of Hudson Valley Trail Network elect Poughkeepsie-area rail-trail system as Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's 30th Hall of Fame inductee

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The galvanization of the Poughkeepsie community by passionate trail supporters helped spur the Hudson Valley Trail Network's selection as the newest inductee into Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's (RTC) Rail-Trail Hall of Fame. The trail network—composed of the [Hudson Valley Rail Trail](#), [Walkway Over the Hudson](#) and [William R. Steinhaus Dutchess Rail Trail](#)—was selected as RTC's 30th inductee via a public vote held in honor of RTC's 30th anniversary, with the Hudson Valley Trail Network receiving almost 54 percent of the 19,885 total votes placed.

RTC is the largest trails organization in America, representing a community of more than 160,000 members and supporters—including 33,000 in New York—and more than 850,000 trail users. RTC selects Hall of Fame rail-trails based on merits such as scenic value, high use, trail amenities, historical significance, excellence in management and maintenance, community connections and geographic distribution. As a Hall of Fame inductee, the Hudson Valley Trail Network will receive national publicity, trail signage, coverage in *Rails to Trails* magazine and an unveiling event.

“The way that the Hudson Valley Trail Network seamlessly connects three unique trails is a prime example of how integrated trail systems can produce important benefits for communities—for transportation, tourism and economic development,” said RTC President Keith Laughlin. “We’re thrilled to induct the Hudson Valley Trail Network as our 30th Hall of Fame rail-trail.”

The popular [Hudson Valley Trail Network](#) covers 18 miles and connects three rail-trails, stretching from Highland, over the Hudson River and through Poughkeepsie, to Hopewell Junction. On the west side of the river, the flat, paved Hudson Valley Rail Trail stretches nearly 4 miles through hardwood forests, over Black Creek and under two spectacular stone-arch bridges. Walkway Over the Hudson runs 212 feet above the river along the steel cantilever truss Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge (which was once the longest bridge in the world) and draws a half-million visitors annually. The Dutchess Rail Trail runs through what seems like a perpetually green landscape of dense tree cover, linking Poughkeepsie at the Hudson River with smaller towns to its southeast. The Hudson Valley Trail Network was RTC's [Trail of the Month in March 2016](#).

“I’m ecstatic that the Hudson Valley Trail Network got the most votes and will be entered into the Hall of Fame,” said Fred Schaeffer, former chairman of Walkway Over the Hudson, who spearheaded the development of that trail. “I’ve admired the work of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy since I started bike riding 30 years ago. We’re certainly honored to have our trail recognized as a Hall of Fame trail.”

Governments in Dutchess and Ulster counties campaigned to get constituents to vote for the Hudson Valley Trail Network.

“Thank you to all those who voted for our Dutchess Rail Trail, along with the Walkway Over the Hudson and Hudson Valley Rail Trail, to be part of the 2016 Rail-Trail Hall of Fame!” said Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro. “The Dutchess Rail Trail has been a destination for thousands since the first phase opened, as people flock to enjoy the scenic views, the quiet and tranquility, as well as the easy-to-navigate surface along the 13-mile path. Together with the Walkway Over the Hudson and Hudson Valley Rail Trail, we have created an 18-mile-plus world-class treasure that has no equal.”

“We are pleased that the Hudson Valley Rail Trail has been selected for this national honor,” said Ulster County Executive Mike Hein. “The beauty of the Hudson Valley is well known

across the country, and we are pleased to share it with the thousands of rail-trail visitors who come every year. We look forward to continuing our efforts to expand the rail-trail into a world-class interconnected system that will connect the Walkway Over the Hudson and the Ashokan Reservoir.”

The competition was open to a public vote from June 6 to June 15. The runner-up was the Rio Grande Trail in Colorado. The [other Hall of Fame nominees](#), all of whom received support from their communities, were the Banks-Vernonia State Trail in Oregon, GHS Swamp Rabbit Trail in South Carolina and Shelby Farms Greenline in Tennessee. RTC’s Rail-Trail Hall of Fame social media hashtag is #RailTrailHOF.

The Hudson Valley Trail Network is the second Rail-Trail Hall of Fame inductee from New York State; the first was the [High Line](#) in New York City. For more information on rail-trails in New York, see RTC’s [state page](#).

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), a nonprofit organization with more than 160,000 members and supporters, is the nation's largest trails organization dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines and connecting corridors. Founded in 1986, RTC's national office is located in Washington, D.C., with regional offices in California, Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania. For more information, visit railstotrails.org.