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Barrow cosponsors bill to increase funding for the Augusta Canal

Bill would double available matching funds to \$20 million and extend the expiration date until the year 2027

WASHINGTON – 12th District Congressman John Barrow (D-GA) has signed on as an original cosponsor of legislation proposing to increase and extend federal matching funds for nine of the nation’s twenty-seven designated National Heritage Areas. If passed by the 109th Congress, the measure would double the amount of money available to the Augusta Canal – the only National Heritage Area in the State of Georgia.

“The canal is one of Augusta’s oldest treasures,” Representative Barrow said. “After 160 years, this waterway continues to serve the people of Augusta – providing recreation, education, and economic opportunities. In addition, the canal’s power plant remains a reliable source of renewable hydroelectric energy.”

Built in 1845, the Augusta Canal is the only industrial power canal of its kind still in use today. Last year, the two Enterprise Mill hydropower generators operated by the Augusta Canal Authority produced 7,368,096 kilowatt hours of electricity, generating \$227,123 of income used to match Congressional appropriations to the Augusta Canal National Heritage Area.

Starting in the mid 1970’s, local leaders began working to preserve and protect the aging landmark, leading efforts to add the canal and many of its 19th century mills to the National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks. Since then, the canal’s rebirth has been instrumental in attracting new business and residential development to the area.

“The success of the canal’s restoration and ongoing upkeep proves how important federal and local partnerships can be,” Barrow added. “Working together, we’re not only preserving a piece of our region’s history, we’re also building an important community and business resource for all of Augusta.”

Since being established as a National Heritage Area in 1996, the Augusta Canal has been eligible for a maximum of \$10 million in federal matching funds through the year 2012. As of November 2004, canal had received a total of \$3,986,000 in federal appropriations. Under this new proposal, the expiration date of 2012 would be extended to 2027, while doubling the available federal matching funds from \$10 million to \$20 million.

“The Augusta Canal is a vital part of our city’s identity and economy,” State Representative Quincy Murphy,” (D-Augusta) added. “We’re glad to see that Augusta’s new congressman, John Barrow, understands the importance of preserving this historical landmark for future generations.”

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