

Hudson Valley Landowners Win Over \$1.3 Million In Case Over Empire State Trail Expansion

HOPEWELL JUNCTION, NY, UNITED STATES, April 21,

2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Landowners across the

Hudson Valley have secured more than \$1.3 million in compensation after successfully challenging a federal taking of private property tied to the extension of the [Empire State Trail](#), and planned [Beacon-Hopewell Rail Trail](#).



There is an opportunity for more landowners to seek compensation. We hope landowners will consider bringing a claim before the statute of limitations forever bars their opportunity for a recovery."

Steven M. Wald

The claims involve a 41-mile former railroad corridor running through Beacon, Fishkill, Hopewell Junction, Stormville, past Brewster, to the New York-Connecticut state line – impacting hundreds of Hudson Valley families whose properties border the planned or current trail.

The case was brought by landowners represented by [Stewart, Wald & Smith](#), a firm that focuses on representation of landowners' property rights in rail-trail conversions against the federal government.

When former railroad lines are converted into public trails, disputes often arise over whether the government has taken private property without paying for it. The Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution provides that private property shall not be taken for public use, without just compensation.

In the case, *Zanzarella, et. al. v. United States*, Case No. 24-239, after two years of litigation, much has happened. Some landowners have secured payouts amounting to over \$1.3 Million in recovery and yet others proceeded to trial. Just earlier this month, in a recent trial held in Manhattan, New York for a portion of the claims in *Zanzarella, et. al. v. United States*, attorneys Steven M. Wald, Michael J. Smith, & Allison P. Bettlach presented evidence for the Court to determine monetary damages for additional landowners.

The firm represents more than 200 landowners in multiple related cases involving this corridor and the planned extension of the Empire State Trail: *Snee, et. al. v. United States*, Case No. 24-1991, *Active Dog, LLC, et. al. v. United States*, Case No. 25-1540, *Almenas, et. al. v. United States*,

Case No. 24-199, Sherman, et. al. v. United States, Case No. 24-2010, and Durk, et. al. v. United States, Case No. 24-2391, all filed in the United States Court of Federal Claims. While some claims have already resulted in settlement payments to landowners, and some have won on proving the government is liable, additional cases remain pending, with further compensation expected as litigation continues. Attorney Steven Wald stated: "There is an opportunity for hundreds more landowners to seek compensation at this time. We hope landowners will consider bringing a claim before the statute of limitations forever bars their opportunity for a recovery."

Rail-to-trail conversions—where former railroad corridors are transformed into public trails—often raise complex legal issues involving property ownership. Under the Fifth Amendment, the government must pay landowners when private property is taken for public use. Cases like this are becoming more common as rail lines are converted into public trails nationwide.

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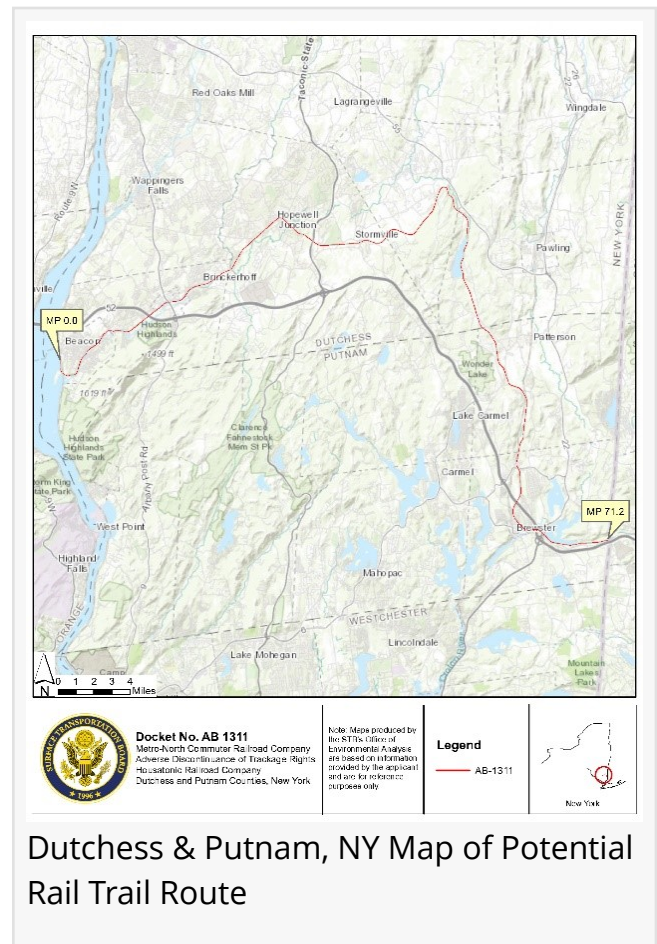
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