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News

\$28M rockfall mitigation project could improve traveler safety on Route 29, DOT says

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By [Caroline Fassett | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) has proposed a project that it says could reduce the potential for serious rockfall events and improve the safety and mobility of travelers along Route 29 in Kingwood Township.

Four rockfall areas -- including the historic rock formation known as the “Devil’s Tea Table” -- that are within a three-mile segment of Route 29 between mileposts 27.4 and 30.4, will be addressed in accordance with the project, which is scheduled to begin in late 2024 or early 2025, officials from the DOT said.

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According to DOT Deputy Director of Communications Stephen Schapiro, the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) Rock Fall Hazard Management System has ranked the two most serious areas within the project third and fifteenth in highest rockfall hazard risk in the state.

In the past two years, there have been 11 rockfall incidents on this stretch of highway, he added.

While current plans for construction entail vegetation removal, slope scaling and the installation of mesh netting and rockfall catch fences, because the design of the project has not been finalized, these changes may or may not occur, Schapiro said.

Schapiro added that the project’s estimated cost of approximately \$28 million

Schapiro added that the project's estimated cost of approximately \$28 million can also change upon the design's finalization.

The state is in the process of conducting environmental studies in the area, including evaluations of its vegetation, species, and potential construction impact to water quality and structures in the region.

"If necessary, mitigation will be incorporated in the project," Schapiro said.

Organizations and residents of Kingwood Township have expressed concerns regarding how the project will impact both the environment and the aesthetic value of the region.

Members of the Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic River Management Council have pointed out that Kingwood Township is located within the Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic River corridor, Route 29 is part of the Delaware River Scenic Byway, and the area neighbors the D&R Canal Park, habitats of endangered species, and acres and open space areas preserved by the state.

Maryann Carroll, Executive Director for Delaware River Greenway Partnership, which administers the Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic River Management Council, described the proposed rock removal as "incredibly significant" in terms of its impact upon "one of the most beautiful areas in New Jersey."

"You're literally changing the landscape ... You're going from something remarkable and beautiful to something very different," Carroll said. "And we really need DOT to be more forthcoming with their final plan, and engaging the public, and considering public concern through the process."

Schapiro said that the state intends to continue communicating with the surrounding community leading up to the project's execution.

"NJDOT works closely with local officials, residents and businesses on our projects, and has met with town officials several times in the past two years, and there will be continued opportunity for public input as the project progresses," Schapiro said.

Caroline Fassett can be reached at cfassett@niadvancemedia.com.

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