



c/o Delaware River Greenway Partnership, PO Box 15, Stockton, NJ 08559
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March 29, 2021

Board of Chosen Freeholders
County of Hunterdon
71 Main Street
Flemington, NJ 08822

Dear Freeholders Soloway, Lanza, Holt, Rich, and Van Doren,

RE: Proposed NJDOT Rockfall Mitigation Project, Kingwood Township, NJ

Today I am wearing my hat as Chairman of the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River Management Council (www.lowerdelawarewildandscenicriver.org). As you may know, the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was created by Congress in 1968 (Public Law 90-542; 16 U.S.C. 1271 et seq.) to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The Lower Delaware River, and three main tributaries to the River – the Tinicum, Tohickon and Paunacussing – were added to the Act in 2000. Hunterdon County has been and continues to be involved in our partnership over the last twenty years, along with other counties and municipalities on both sides of the river, the States of NJ and PA, as well as nonprofit environmental and land stewardship organizations.

We are writing today because our Management Council follows issues that could impact River resources and the goals of our Management [Plan](#) (water quality, natural resources, historic resources, recreation, economic development, and open space preservation). As such, we have been tracking the anticipated rockfall mitigation project proposed by the NJDOT along three miles of Route 29 in Kingwood Township, also known as the Delaware River Scenic Byway. Our Council is glad to hear that you are considering the potential impacts this project could have on the environment, tourism, and the scenic qualities of the area. The project is expected to remove significant amounts of vegetation, blast large quantities of rock, and potentially install retaining walls and draped fencing resulting in a permanent urban industrial appearance of the roadway.

The Council first alerted the County to the project back in 2019 with a public information letter in anticipation of a meeting held in July of that year between NJDOT and members of the public. A summary of the meeting can be found in a content box on the Lower Delaware website marked “Devil’s Tea Table.” Also included on our website are recent news articles about rockfall mitigation projects in NJ, the only public documents about the Kingwood project dating back to 2015, and a PowerPoint designed by a volunteer with the Devil’s Tea Table Alliance, a group comprised of concerned NJ and PA residents.

We thank you for taking a look at the potential impacts this project can have on the greater Hunterdon area and on our partners in Bucks County, PA. While you already know that this area is in a federally designated Wild & Scenic corridor and along a federally designed Scenic Byway, the area also holds significance in geologic history as well as in Native American lore. With the area’s exquisite beauty, it is also home to endangered plants and animals.

While the dollars assigned to the project and the necessity for the initiative can be debated, we will stay focused on our concerns about the irreversible environmental impacts the project can have on the river as well as to homeowners in Kingwood Twp., NJ and Tinicum Twp., PA. Kingwood residents are very concerned about long-term effect rockblasting will have on their wells and septic systems. Tinicum residents are worried their viewscape will be erased.

With that said, the involvement of the County is very important. There are two documents that would be of interest to your professionals examining the project. First, page 24 of our Management Plan states:

Water Quality: Maintain existing water quality in the Delaware River and its tributaries from measurably degrading and improve it where practical. Policies: (1) Achieve the highest practical state and federal water quality designation for the river and its tributaries. (2) Manage point discharge and storm water non-point runoff to minimize degradation of the river. (3) Encourage the use of Best Management Practices in the areas within the river corridor to minimize water quality degradation from storm water runoff. (4) Encourage the use of Best Management Practices for activities other than agricultural that could result in water quality degradation from storm water runoff. (5) Discourage inappropriate development in floodplain, wetlands, steep slopes and buffer strips along the Lower Delaware River and its tributaries.

Note: There are several streams that flow through project area directly into the Delaware River.

Additionally, our Stewardship Handbook can be found at <https://lowerdelawarewildandscenic.org/index.php/resources/documents/guides/stewardship-handbook/>. Pages 10-15 of the Handbook also includes commentary about water quality.

The goals of the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River Management Council are very similar to those of Hunterdon County when it comes to the Delaware River. Thank you for wanting to completely understand the impacts this project can have on the County and the local communities before it is even started.

Feel free to contact Maryann Carroll, Executive Director of the Delaware River Greenway Partnership, who serves as the administrator of the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic Management Council, with any questions. Maryann also serves on the NJDOT Public Advisory Committee for the I80 rockfall project. She can be reached at maryann@delawarivergp.org.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Richard Dodds

Chairman

cc: Maryann Carroll, Executive Director, Delaware River Greenway Partnership
Sarah Bursky, Community Planner/Liaison to the Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic River, NPS
Brad Myhre, Clerk of the Board/Deputy Chief of Staff, Hunterdon County Freeholders
Carrie Fellows, Director, Dept. of Planning and Land Use, Hunterdon County
Cynthia Keller, Clerk, Kingwood Township, NJ
Teri Lewis, Township Manager/Treasurer, Tinicum Township, PA