



## Delaware Township Resolution #2022-89

### Rockfall Mitigation Project – Route 29

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WHEREAS, the middle and lower Delaware River segments were designated a National Wild and Scenic River by Congress and President Jimmy Carter in 1978, and the lower Delaware River was designated by Congress and President Bill Clinton in 2000; and

WHEREAS, The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) intends to construct rockfall mitigation in Kingwood Township on cliffs adjacent to approximately 3 miles of Route 29 from Mile Post 27.3 near Byram to a point, north of the Devil's Tea Table locality, at Mile Post 30.43, including the removal of trees and vegetation, blasting on much of the rockface, rock removal and reinforcement, installing metal mesh or "draping" materials to the rockface, the creation of a new barrier or a "catchment ditch," and applying concrete to the smoothed rockface including to the Devil's Tea Table geologic structure, to keep rocks from falling onto Route 29; and

WHEREAS, the river bluffs from Byram to Devil's Tea Table are noted as having "remarkable scenic values" in the Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic River corridor; and

WHEREAS, the area parallels the Delaware River Scenic Byway, a designation by the USDOT, endorsed by the NJDOT, and subject to the Delaware River Corridor Management Plan; and

WHEREAS, Delaware Township has been involved with successful grants to protect the scenic vistas and to support the Delaware River Scenic Byway; one grant from the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions and one from the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic Byway Partnership; and

WHEREAS, the bluffs along Route 29 contain world famous outcrops of Triassic-age lake cycles, known as van Houten cycles, providing the textbook record of lake formation due to climate change in the Jurassic and Triassic Periods of the Mesozoic Era, and which could be considered "geologic heritage" due to possessing aesthetic, intrinsic or scientific and educational value, and providing unique insight into geological processes; and

WHEREAS, the Devil's Tea Table geologic formation also has unique local, historical and geological significance, and is believed to hold religious significance to Native American peoples; and

WHEREAS, the archaeological record of the Kingwood Township Route 29 corridor revealed artifacts of Indigenous people and prehistoric man inhabiting this portion of the river corridor dating from 6500 B.C. through the 1700's, when the Turtle clan of the Lenapi Indians occupied the area; and

WHEREAS, the NJDEP Natural Heritage Priority Sites Coverage was created to identify critically important areas to conserve New Jersey's biological diversity, with particular emphasis on rare plant species and ecological communities, and the area known as Devil's Tea Table, including siltstone and shale cliff and adjacent dry woods overlooking the Delaware River, is designated by NJDEP as Natural Heritage Priority site number S.USNJHP1\*203 because it "Contains an occurrence of a shale cliff natural community and populations of endangered and special concern plant species" and the area known as Byram cliffs and wooded rocky diabase hillside is site number S.USNJHP1\*151 because it contains "One special concern plant species plus historically documented plant species"; and

WHEREAS, the project will also negatively impact rare, threatened and endangered plants and wildlife including American Bald Eagles, copperheads, and several species of bats and fish; and

WHEREAS, The New Jersey Department of Transportation intends to construct rockfall mitigation in West Amwell Township on cliffs adjacent to approximately 1.25 miles of Route 29 between mileposts 17.0-18.25, including the removal of trees and vegetation, blasting on much of the rock face, rock removal and reinforcement, installing metal mesh or "draping" materials to the rock face, the creation of a new barrier or a "catchment ditch," and applying concrete to the to the smoothed rock face including to the Goat Hill geologic structure, to keep rocks from falling onto Route 29; and

WHEREAS, Governor DiFrancesco in 2011 signed into law a ban on regional and interstate 102-inch wide trucks, the typical tractor trailer truck size, on Route 29 through West Amwell, Lambertville, Stockton and Frenchtown thereby reducing commercial traffic and safety concerns; and

WHEREAS, Goat Hill has historical significance as one of the locations General George Washington used to scout his historic December 25th crossing of the Delaware River; and

WHEREAS, the visual alteration of Goat Hill will negatively impact public enjoyment of the D&R Canal State Park; and

WHEREAS, Route 29 is a major route in Delaware Township connecting the communities of Lambertville and Frenchtown, whose scenic vistas enhance the beauty of Delaware Township; and

WHEREAS, when and if complete, the mitigation as planned will radically change the visual nature of the river valley in the area, forever; and

WHEREAS, Route 29 is the north-south commuting route in the area and the project will cause significant traffic delays and detours for several months or years during construction and will impact residents and commuters in Delaware Township, Frenchtown Borough, Kingwood Township, West Amwell Township, the City of Lambertville and Stockton Borough; and

WHEREAS, residents and governing bodies in the communities impacted by this rockfall mitigation project desire and deserve a more robust and comprehensive community stakeholder process with the NJDOT to discuss and thoroughly vet mitigation options for the purported rockfall problem and to explore potential alternatives to the project as presented;

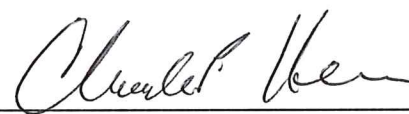
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor and Township Committee of Delaware Township, County of Hunterdon, State of New Jersey does hereby call upon the NJDOT to pause moving forward with the rockfall mitigation plan for Route 29 in Hunterdon County and to immediately engage a robust stakeholder process with residents and local officials within the communities impacted by the proposed project;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor and Township Committee of Delaware Township respectfully urge the NJDOT and the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) to examine alternatives to the proposed rockfall mitigation plan as presented.

ATTEST: .



Tiffany Crivelli, Deputy Township Clerk



Charles Herman, Deputy Mayor

Approved: July 11, 2022