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New Report - Delaware River Deepening Dumped Again

The Delaware Riverkeeper Network and National Wildlife Federation have announced release of a complimentary set of reports challenging, once again, the Delaware River Deepening Project. The first report titled "Delaware River Deepening – Dumped Again – This Project Does Not Pay" challenges the most recent economic study issued by the Army Corps of Engineers in support of the Deepening project, the second titled "Delaware River Deepening – Dumped Again – Environmental Threats Too Great to Sustain" highlights the environmental threats and harms that are wrought by the project.

The Delaware River serves many purposes: it provides an entrance way to major east coast ports, it provides drinking water to over 15 million people, it supports recreation and ecotourism; and it provides food, water and habitat to fish, wildlife and plants throughout the region.

According to Maya K. van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper, "the Delaware River Deepening project brings with it environmental and community threats and harms that we simply cannot accept. The Delaware River deepening has become a political prize that brings with it no real winnings and in fact would make our river and region big losers. Our ports may want help to grow and to continue their prosperous move forward – they cannot expect to do that on the backs of the rest of the community. We need to be investing our limited resources in port projects that make sense and will truly make a difference – not in projects that fail to enhance the port while at the same time harm the rest of our River communities."

David Conrad, representative for the National Wildlife Federation says "Like all other important national resources, management and stewardship must be based on a balancing act between purposes. And yet, for over 10 years, the United States Army Corps of Engineers has tried to disturb that balance by pushing for a deeper channel to accommodate larger ships. But following the Corps' plan would be an unmitigated disaster. Not only would it create an environmental nightmare, it would leave the U.S. taxpayer footing the bill for a project that cannot pay for itself."

The project has been challenged by local, regional, statewide and national organization. Tim Dillingham, Executive Director for the American Littoral Society points out "that very fact that the project continues to lack key environmental permits and approvals as well as funding it needs to move forward is a strong testament to its many environmental and economic failings."

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Over the years, this project has been subject to extensive criticism by outside sources, most notably the U.S. General Accounting Office. After each round, the Corps has produced yet another document that is claimed to address the issues. The latest such document, "Delaware River Main Channel Deepening Project (Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware) Supplement to Comprehensive Economic Reanalysis Report December 2002" released in February 2004 fails to put these concerns to rest.

In response to this document, we have prepared this series of three reports – one an overview, the second covering economic issues, and the third addressing environmental issues. According to van Rossum "Any one of these reports by itself provides a convincing case against this project. Together they paint a picture that simply cannot be ignored."