



March 20, 2012

Hon. Maurice D. Hinchey
Office of Rep. Hinchey
City Hall, Third Floor
167 Jones Street
Middletown, NY 10940

RE: Planned replacement of the Pond Eddy Bridge in the Town of Lumberland, Salem County, NY.

Dear Congressman Hinchey:

We urge you to take the steps necessary, including a review of federal funds, to stop the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's (PA DOT) plans to demolish the 100-year old Pond Eddy Bridge. This PA project is a threat to the Upper Delaware Wild and Scenic River and the National Scenic Byway. As currently envisioned it's a waste of state and federal money and will require the destruction of a historically significant bridge. The project also includes elements that are harmful to the quality of the Delaware River, its habitats and aquatic life. The project as being proposed is not necessary and therefore should be stopped. At a minimum it needs to be subjected to the full Environmental Impact Statement process of the National Environmental Policy Act, not given a pass under this law as PA DOT is seeking.

With more than 10,000 members in four states the Delaware Riverkeeper Network is a grassroots organization dedicated to protecting the Delaware River, its tributaries and ecosystems from degradation. The Delaware River and its ecological beauty and health are cornerstones of strength for the economies and quality of life of up River communities, and the River provides unparalleled opportunities for recreation for individuals and families from across the nation.

PA DOT has indicated it will construct a causeway across the Delaware River in order to build the proposed new bridge structure. This causeway will cut and modify the flow of the River and block the passage of migratory fish such as Shad. Shad populations on the Delaware and elsewhere along the East Coast are already at significantly depressed levels and should not be subjected to increasing harms. Other species will also most certainly be impacted, as will boaters who are trying to enjoy the beauty and free flows of the Delaware River system. The project will degrade

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the beauty, ecosystems and recreational experience of this Wild and Scenic River system. This action violates the goals Congress included in the Wild and Scenic River Act.

Designs for a new bridge, while meeting the one hundred year flood requirement, are lower than the existing structure and may not withstand an event similar to the 2006 flood. A causeway will also block the flow of winter ice creating safety hazards. And there could be other implications for high flow flood waters that aren't receiving attention, analysis or discussion.

Boaters may also be forced to portage their boats around the causeway creating other risks. Liveries are one of the key businesses making up ecotourism in the Upper Delaware; diminishing the boating experience will most certainly have an economic impact on these businesses.

PA DOT's claim that the agency must build a 40-ton capacity bridge in a rural location serving as few as 12 Pennsylvania residents is disingenuous at best, and frankly borders on the ridiculous. Estimates on the cost of this bridge vary but will certainly reach \$12 million. PA DOT has been unwilling to consider rehabilitating the current bridge, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as well as the historic registers of New York and Pennsylvania. This is a reckless waste of taxpayer money during tough fiscal times.

We join with other groups from the region in urging you to intervene and insist that a credible needs assessment and cost analysis be made by an independent engineering firm with expertise in bridge rehabilitation. We also urge that PA DOT be mandated to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and subject this project to a full Environmental Impact Statement to ensure a full analysis of need, alternatives, and environmental and community impacts.

Please feel free to contact me to discuss this matter further.

Respectfully,



Maya K. van Rossum
the Delaware Riverkeeper