



Sugarhouse Casino – Stay out of our Riparian Lands

November 16, 2007
Stephanie Naidoff, Director
Philadelphia Department of Commerce
1515 Arch Street, 12th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102
215/683-2097 (fax)

Dear Director Naidoff,

The Delaware Riverkeeper Network urges you not to grant a license to the Sugarhouse Casinos for construction of a casino on riparian lands to the Delaware River.

The lands that sit along the banks of the Delaware River and those that site between the high and low watermark are essential for the health of the Delaware River. The fact that so much of the City's riverfront and submerged lands are already developed and/or bulkheaded does not reduce the ecological value and importance of the lands at issue here but in fact makes them more valuable. Vegetation along the banks of the River and the habitat between the high and low water mark are important for the ecological health of the River and its aquatic ecosystems. Fish and other aquatic life rely on these areas for food and habitat, as well as important water quality protections.

The City of Philadelphia as a community is looking to capitalize on the health of the Delaware River. But in order to do so the Delaware River needs to in fact be healthy. Because of its desire to capitalize on the River, the City has an obligation, a heightened obligation, to take steps to protect and restore health to the Delaware River and its aquatic ecosystems. Allowing every square inch of riverfront to be covered with buildings and paving, and allowing more and more structures to encroach on river riparian lands, does not honor this obligation.

When I travel the Philadelphia reach of the Delaware River, monitoring the health of the river and potential threats to its quality and restoration, I see individuals of all ages reaching out to the river, finding those last remaining areas of natural green and spending their time there fishing, swimming and enjoying the beauty and nature of the river. It is important that the Delaware River be appreciated and protected as a community asset. Giving it away to the highest bidder for damaging development is a betrayal - it is a betrayal to the City community and to the River community (both the human and nonhuman elements).

On behalf of the members of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network I urge you not to grant the requested license to Sugarhouse.

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The Delaware Riverkeeper is the lead advocate giving a voice to the Delaware River, championing its rights as a living member of our community, and is leader for the Delaware Riverkeeper Network. Established in 1988 upon the appointment of the Delaware Riverkeeper, the Delaware Riverkeeper Network's (DRN) professional staff and volunteers work throughout the entire Delaware River Watershed, which includes portions of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and New York. The Delaware Riverkeeper and the Delaware Riverkeeper Network protect and defend the Delaware River, its tributaries and its watershed, and are committed to restoring the natural balance where it has been lost and ensuring its preservation where it still exists.

Yours sincerely,

Maya K. van Rossum
the Delaware Riverkeeper