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**Taxpayer and Conservation Groups Decry \$5 Million
Delaware River Deepening Earmark**

*Groups call on Congress to reject politically-driven earmark,
focus on fiscal and environmental health*

(December 16, 2010) Conservation and taxpayer organizations today decried the U.S. Senate's earmark funding for the Delaware Main Channel Deepening project in Delaware, New Jersey and Pennsylvania in the FY 2011 'Omnibus' Appropriations bill. This \$332 million project has been questioned three times by the Government Accountability Office, called economically wasteful and environmentally dangerous in numerous studies and has been legally challenged by two states and five advocacy groups.

"At the same time New Jersey and Delaware and several conservation organizations have sued the Corps of Engineers for violating a host of state and federal environmental laws in planning this project, some Senators are trying to force feed funding of this project by classic log-rolling," said David Conrad, Senior Water Resource Specialist of the National Wildlife Federation.

"Democrats and Republicans promised fiscal responsibility. Their Government Accountability Office has three times questioned the deepening. Multiple state and federal environmental agencies and experts have identified a wealth of risks to drinking water supplies for millions. Hundreds of millions of dollars provided to the economy by Delaware River resources are at risk with deepening. This project has pitted the federal government against the states. Responsible leadership would not fund this project." said Maya van Rossum of the Delaware Riverkeeper.

"Clearly some lawmakers didn't get the message voters sent Election Day. Instead of tackling the record deficits and restraining from parochial project spending, powerful Senators are stuffing hundreds of water project earmarks into the end of year spending bill, piling more onto the billions of dollars in earmarked spending," said Steve Ellis of the fiscal watchdog group Taxpayers for Common Sense.

“The Delaware Deepening project threatens endangered species, municipal water supplies, and the health of the river ecosystem including the Delaware Bay wetlands that provide vital habitat and flood protection benefits. The project will also have wide-ranging risks to human health, including potential introduction of toxic materials into the river and aquifer,” said Dalal Aboulhoshn from Sierra Club.

“We call on Congress and President Obama to reject these tactics and the blatant use of earmarks to propel this poorly conceived and enormously costly project forward. Here’s a budget savings, cut this \$300 million project and help the environment at the same time,” said Jane Nogaki of New Jersey Environmental Federation.

“These tactics by Republicans and Democrats alike is just one more example of putting special interest pork over the needs of the people and the planet,” said Paul Schwartz, National Policy Coordinator for Clean Water Action. “Scarce tax dollars should go towards projects that will help not hurt our communities.”

“The State of Delaware denied the project’s permit on July 24, 2009 based on wide-ranging and poorly analyzed risks to human health, the environment, and outstanding economic questions. Most recently the National Marine Fisheries Service identified the project as a major threat to Atlantic Sturgeon, a species soon to be listed as endangered which used to generate over \$16 million of economic benefit (worth over \$400 million in present day dollars) to the region,” said Brenna Goggin, of Delaware Nature Society.

The FY2011 Omnibus Appropriations bill is expected to be voted in the Senate in the coming days.

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