

RESOLUTION OPPOSING ROUTE 80 WESTBOUND ROCKFALL MITIGATION PROJECT

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) intends to build a series of high industrial fences and a 60-foot concrete pyramid called a “rockfall berm” along Route 80 through the Delaware Water Gap; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Route 80 Rockfall Mitigation will be built on lands located in Knowlton and Hardwick Townships and the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area along the Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River; and

WHEREAS, stakeholders Knowlton Township and Hardwick Township have formally opposed the project, and have not given their permission for this project within their boundaries; and

WHEREAS, construction of the Route 80 fence is slated to begin in 2020, may last two years, and will cost between \$55 and \$58 million according to NJDOT estimates; and

WHEREAS, the stated intent of the fence and concrete berm is to prevent rockfall; and

WHEREAS, the NJDOT’s Concept Development Report acknowledges that “NJDOT provided limited rockfall event data, and the actual frequency of rock activity is unknown” for this project; and

WHEREAS, there are no documented rockfall events nor any recollections of significant rockfall events over the last ten years within Area “D” portion of the project where the concrete pyramid is to be placed; and

WHEREAS, , there are 70 to 80 motor vehicle accidents on this section of Route 80 annually due to speed and poor road conditions yet this project involves no road improvements; and

WHEREAS, the Delaware Water Gap is a nationally prominent scenic wonder and a gateway to the one of the most widely used National Park units in the nation; and

WHEREAS, the proposed project will directly impact the viewshed of the Appalachian Trail, which has an entrance at the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area; and

WHEREAS, the rockface and surrounding habitat contain Federal and State listed Threatened & Endangered species and "species of concern" that will be disturbed or taken; and

WHEREAS, the income generated by tourism to the Delaware Water Gap and the scenic value of Northwest New Jersey will likely be negatively impacted by the proposed fence; and

WHEREAS, the millions of dollars appropriated for this non-essential project could be better directed to New Jersey’s decaying roads and bridges.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the New Jersey Sierra Club Chapter requests the assistance of the following elected representatives in halting the current NJDOT project and allowing it to continue only under the conditions that rock mitigation and/or road improvements occur in a manner that does not harm the habitat and viewsheds of the nationally recognized Delaware Water Gap and Appalachian Trail or the surrounding natural environment.

- 1) U.S. Senator Cory Booker
- 2) U.S. Senator Bob Menendez
- 3) U.S. Congressman Josh Gottheimer
- 4) State Senator Steven Oroho
- 5) State Assemblyman Parker Space
- 6) State Assemblyman Harold Wirths

Date: March 3, 2018

Richard Isaac
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Gregory L. Gorman
Conservation Chair,