

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
TOWNSHIP OF MIDDLE SMITHFIELD
MONROE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**

RESOLUTION 09-2019-5

**REQUESTING A STUDY OF THE IMPACTS OF THE NJDOT I-80 ROCKFALL MITIGATION PROJECT TO
THE INFRASTRUCTURE, ECONOMY AND COMMERCE OF THE POCONOS**

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 project will occur on land in the Gap owned by Knowlton Township, Hardwick Township, and the Delaware Water Gap National Park; and

WHEREAS, the NJDOT’s website indicates construction of this \$59 million project is currently slated to begin in 2023 and will last four years; 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, the project is widely opposed by more than 20 area towns, the NJ League of Municipalities, the NJ Sierra Club, the National Parks Conservation Association, Access Fund, and several Native American tribes; and

WHEREAS, recent data shows there are 3.7 million visitors to the Delaware National Water Gap park annually and those visitors spent \$126.3 million in communities within 60 miles of the park and supported 1887 jobs*; and

WHEREAS, according to the “Economic Impact of Tourism in the Poconos” report, tourism is a major economic driver in the area, with 27.9 million visitors to the Pocono region in 2018; and

WHEREAS, those 27.9 million visitors spent \$3.3 *billion* dollars in the area; and

WHEREAS, tourism to the Delaware Water Gap will likely be negatively impacted by four years of gridlock that will result from this project’s construction on Route 80; and

WHEREAS, in addition to tourism, local businesses that depend for their livelihood on the free flow of traffic may be affected by this four-year non-essential project; and

WHEREAS, detour routes identified in the 2011 Concept Development Report bring highway traffic and tractor trailers into residential Pennsylvania communities onto roads not equipped and rated for it, which also has a monetary cost; and

WHEREAS, in a letter dated September 4, 2019, the NJDOT Commissioner denied the request of NJ State Senator Steven Oroho, Assemblyman Hal Wirths, and Assemblyman Parker Space for a study on the impacts that this project will have on area business and commerce; and

WHEREAS, it is irresponsible to proceed with any project of this magnitude without evaluating and quantifying the impacts to area residents.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IS RESOLVED on this 24 day of Sept 2019, the Middle Smithfield Township Board of Supervisors requests that the New Jersey Department of Transportation reconsider its decision to proceed with this project without evaluating the impacts that it will have on the infrastructure and economy of the surrounding area.

Be it further resolved, that we request the assistance of the following elected representatives in halting the current NJDOT project until those effects are studied:

- 1) Pennsylvania Governor Wolf
- 2) U.S. Congressman Matt Cartwright
- 3) U.S. Senator Pat Toomey
- 4) Pennsylvania State Senator Mario Scavello
- 5) Pennsylvania State Representative Rosemary Brown
- 6) New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy

RESOLVED THIS 26th DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2019, BY THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF MIDDLE SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP AT A LAWFUL SESSION DULY ASSEMBLED.

**TOWNSHIP OF MIDDLE SMITHFIELD
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**


Chairperson


Vice Chairperson


Supervisor


Michele Clewell, Secretary



*Data obtained from *NPS Annual Visitor Spending Analysis for 2016*, page 22.
https://www.nps.gov/nature/customcf/NPS_Data_Visualization/docs/2016_VSE.pdf