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Enviros to the Governors: Don't Deepen the Delaware River

Nineteen organizations from both sides of the Delaware River have written Governors Corzine and Minner to state their opposition to an apparently imminent agreement between New Jersey and Pennsylvania whereby New Jersey would step aside and allow the Pennsylvania to pursue deepening of the Delaware River on a unilateral basis.

In the letter the organizations refer to the Delaware River as a “shared River” and any proposed deal whereby one state pursues the deepening project independently as an “abdication of authority and responsibility” to protect the Delaware River and the citizens, residents and ecosystems that rely upon it.

According to the Delaware Riverkeeper Maya van Rossum, “Allowing Pennsylvania to move this project forward sends a clear message that Governor Corzine does not oppose deepening the Delaware River despite the tremendous environmental threat and economic blackhole it represents. New Jersey doesn’t have to fund or sponsor the project in order to nudge it forward – all they have to do is sit back and let it happen, which is what Governor Corzine is planning.”

Tim Dillingham, Executive Director, American Littoral Society stated “Governors Corzine and Minner have an obligation to protect the citizens, environments and economies of New Jersey and Delaware – they should not step back and allow this project to move forward without strong opposition .”

And according to Jane Nogaki of the Environmental Federation the “organizations and citizens from throughout the region will not stand idly by while Governor Corzine strikes this unsavory deal. The facts and figures on the record prove this project is a boondoggle – why Governor Corzine can’t see that, or won’t see that, is a mystery.”

Jeff Tittle, Director of NJ Sierra Club, speaking of the dealmaking, says “this is an outrageous betrayal of the environment and the people of New Jersey.”

van Rossum is concerned that “this agreement is nothing but political deal cutting. The problem with political deal cutting is that it is done to protect the politicians, not the public that put them into office.”

The letter urges the two Governors to “oppose Pennsylvania’s unilateral pursuit” of the deepening project, and to “continue to oppose the project altogether as it is so detrimental to our river and communities and does not benefit our states or region economically.” The letter references a recent Delaware Riverkeeper Network report that documents the environmental and economic failings of the project, as well as referencing the Government Accountability Office reports which found the project provided less than 50 cents of benefit for every dollar invested. The DRN report can be found at www.delawariverkeeper.org.

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The Nineteen organizations, who are joined by William A. Oberle Jr (24th Representative District) in signing the letter, include the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, American Littoral Society, the National Wildlife Federation, the New Jersey Environmental Federation, Unplug Salem Campaign, Coalition for Peace and Justice, New Jersey Sierra Club, South Jersey Land and Water Trust, Delaware Chapter Sierra Club, Delaware State Representative William A. Oberle Jr --24th Representative District, Naamans Creek Watershed Association, Coalition of Community Organizations (COCO), NAACP DE State Conference of Branches, NAACP Wilmington Branch President, Green Party of Delaware, Independent Party of Delaware, New Castle County League of Women Voters, Southern New Castle County Alliance, Delaware Wild Lands, League of Conservation Voters of Delaware. The organizations are joined by.