

# PRESS RELEASE

From the Townships of Knowlton & Hardwick

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **NJDOT Open House on \$65 Million Wall to Be Built in the Delaware Water Gap**

On June 18, 2019, the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) will hold an open house regarding their plans to install a 60-foot high concrete pyramid and series of industrial fences on Route 80 through the Delaware Water Gap.

NJDOT cites the need to protect motorists from potential rockfall on the cliffs in the Delaware Water Gap. They cite 9 rockfall events between the years 2001 and 2016, including one fatality.

The section of Route 80 where the project will be built sees approximately 70 car accidents per year, and several documented fatalities, not related to rockfall. It has an accident rate almost twice the state average. This project will not address the road conditions causing those accidents.

NJDOT records estimate the cost of the project to be \$65.624 million. The three other current rockfall projects by NJDOT scheduled for construction in NJ are projected to cost \$4.6, \$3.25, and \$8 million.

This open house is the result of requests from Congressman Josh Gottheimer, NJ State Senator Steven Oroho, Assemblyman Hal Wirths, and Assemblyman Parker Space, who have requested more information about this project, which has garnered significant response from area residents.

Since the unveiling of the project's design in 2017, the project has garnered opposition from more than 20 area towns and prominent groups including the NJ Sierra Club, National Parks Conservation Association, the NJ League of Municipalities, and three Native American tribes.

"We should not be walling off the Delaware Water Gap. This is a scenic and environmentally sensitive area and a gateway to a National Park. We believe that given the importance of this area, NJDOT should find an alternative. The project does not demonstrate the need for building a concrete wall up 66-foot along the national recreational area," said Jeff Tittel, Director of the New Jersey Sierra Club.

The fence will be built within the NJDOT's right of way on land owned by Knowlton and Hardwick Townships. The project will be built at the entrance to the Delaware Water Gap National Park.

“To date, there has been no convincing data or evidence presented that supports the need for the extent of the project,” says John Donahue, retired Superintendent of the Delaware National Water Gap Park, who worked at the project location from the years 2003 to 2017 . “I would have heard about rockfall incidents in the park and I never received one report or complaint.”

The open house will be held at North Warren Regional High School located at 10 Noe Road, Blirstown NJ, from 4:00 to 8:00 pm and will feature NJDOT subject matter representatives at individual stations to answer questions from the public.