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Governor Chris Christie, U. S. Representative Rob Andrews, State Senate President Steve Sweeney and Acting DEP Commissioner Bob Martin Speak Out Against Planned Dredging of the Delaware River

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Trenton, NJ - Redoubling their efforts to protect South Jersey's environment, Governor Chris Christie and Department of Environmental Protection Acting Commissioner Bob Martin today joined forces with U.S. Representative Rob Andrews and state Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney to oppose the Army Corps of Engineers' plan to deepen the Delaware River's shipping channel and vowed to keep fighting the project.

"We are standing our ground because it is the right thing to do for South Jersey," Governor Christie said during a news conference at Red Bank Battlefield, a Revolutionary War fort along the river in Gloucester County. "Congressman Andrews and Senator Sweeney have fought this project long and hard - and for good reason. The Army Corps expects South Jersey to bear the environmental burden for a project that doesn't make economic sense."

"By taking actions to deepen the Delaware, not only has the Army Corps of Engineers chosen to ignore mandatory environmental regulations but they are placing the health and well-being of our residents at stake," said Congressman Andrews, who represents the First District. "I applaud Governor Christie for standing up against this enormous waste of taxpayer dollars and reckless attempt to dump millions of tons of spoils on South Jersey."

"For all the years of reports and discussions, South Jersey still has never received an acceptable answer to how this dredging project will benefit our communities," Senate President Sweeney said. "South Jersey will not be Pennsylvania's dredge dump and we will not benefit from a project that has such questionable economic ties. I have been fighting this battle since 1998, and have always been able to count on allies like Congressman Andrews and my legislative colleagues. I want to thank the Christie administration for joining this battle we've been waging for so long on behalf of South Jersey."

"The Army Corps keeps passing off obsolete and incomplete scientific data in the hope that everyone will fall in lockstep with the idea of deepening the Delaware," Commissioner Martin said. "This approach doesn't cut it in New Jersey. Too much is at stake. Although a river of commerce, the Delaware supports surprising ecological diversity and is a treasured natural resource that deserves our careful stewardship."

"We strongly oppose the dumping of the dredge sediments in New Jersey, especially for a project that benefits Pennsylvania," Commissioner Martin said.

New Jersey is committed to continuing the legal fight against deepening the river, opposing the Army Corps' effort to transfer New Jersey's lawsuit challenging the project to U.S. District Court in Delaware. A brief filed today before U.S. District Court Judge Joel Pisano in Trenton argues that the transfer is inappropriate because most of the disposal sites are in New Jersey, not Delaware.

The state has also challenged the Army Corps' determination that it is complying with the federal Clean Air Act by purchasing air-pollution credits to mitigate smog caused by its equipment. The DEP argues the Army Corps should implement projects that would result in real pollution reductions, not paper credits.

Commissioner Martin demanded the Army Corps "take concrete steps to reduce air pollution and conduct new, comprehensive environmental studies that include tough sediment-testing protocols similar to requirements it put in place for the deepening of New York-New Jersey Harbor."

The Army Corps is planning to launch the first phase of the project to deepen the river's shipping channel from Camden to the mouth of Delaware Bay. Dredging would stir up millions of tons of sediments, most of which are targeted for disposal at sites the Army Corps owns along the river in South Jersey.

The Army Corps, however, has not updated studies of the project's potential impacts on the river and its wetlands, fish and wildlife in more than a dozen years. It has also failed to provide alternatives to disposing sediments in South Jersey.

Testing technologies have advanced significantly since the Army Corps last performed comprehensive environmental testing. The Army Corps also has never evaluated the potential environmental impacts from the massive oil spill from the tanker Athos I in 2004.

Opposing the Delaware River deepening is one of Governor Christie's environmental priorities. For more on the Governor's environmental objectives, go to: <http://www.nj.gov/governor/priorities/environment.html>.

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