

REPORT  
OF THE  
PORT RARITAN  
DISTRICT COMMISSION  
TO THE  
LEGISLATURE  
OF THE  
STATE OF NEW JERSEY

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SECOND ANNUAL REPORT  
OF  
PORT RARITAN DISTRICT COMMISSION

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January 21, 1929



## REPORT

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TO THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY:

Under date of January 17, 1928, the Port Raritan District Commission presented a report of its activities from its organization on June 23, 1926, and at this time it respectfully presents its report for the year which has just passed.

During 1928 the Commission has been successful in making a considerable amount of progress in the development of the Port Raritan District. Before going into detail as to the progress made in the various projects of the Commission it is our wish to again call them to your attention as they were originally set out in our report of January 17, 1928.

These projects are as follows:

1. Reclamation of large area of low lands at South Amboy.
2. Development of adequate terminal and warehouse facilities at Perth Amboy.
3. Reclamation of low lands at Perth Amboy.
4. Removal of Raritan Arsenal and its development as an industrial terminal.
5. Deepening and straightening South River for the purpose of aiding the commerce now using the river, and as a connection to the proposed New Jersey Ship Canal.
6. Deepening of the Raritan River from Washington Canal to New Brunswick and the New Brunswick Municipal Dock.
7. Deepening of the Raritan River from the main division channel in Raritan Bay to the deep pool above the New York and Long Branch Railroad Bridge at Perth Amboy.
8. Deepening of Woodbridge River.

As to project number 1, reclamation of lowlands at South Amboy, while no physical work has been begun towards its accomplishment, yet a firm foundation has and is being laid towards the creation of a demand for such an improvement. It is expected that this project will in a short time become not only economically possible but necessary as well. Many inquiries have been received by the Commission from private concerns interested in securing industrial locations on deep water with adequate railroad and trucking facilities



for which this tract of land, when improved and reclaimed as suggested in our previous report, is eminently fitted.

The Resident Engineer of the Commission, Samuel J. Mason, has spent sometime in continuing an engineering investigation of terminal sites and other matters conducive to the development of the Perth Amboy district. An investigation of freight rates has also been made under his supervision.

Nothing further has been accomplished relative to the Perth Amboy reclamation project and in the opinion of the Commission nothing further is necessary to be done about this project at the present time.

As to project 4, removal of explosives from Raritan Arsenal and its development as industrial terminal, representatives of the Commission have appeared at several hearings at Washington and as a result of the work of the Commission and other bodies interested in the safety of the central portion of New Jersey assisted by Congressman Harold G. Hoffman and New Jersey's other representatives in Congress, there has been appropriated a considerable amount of money which will be adequate to remove a large part of the dangerous explosives now stored at the Arsenal. This Commission is informed that such removal has been actually started.

It is still our firm belief, however, that the true and proper use for Raritan Arsenal is as a commercial terminal and warehousing center. As such it would still be readily available in the event that in the future it becomes necessary to again use this site as a war arsenal. Its use in the meantime as a commercial enterprise would probably lead to the arsenal being in better shape at such time as it might be needed for war purposes than if kept by the government, as any private interests which might take over a proposition as large as this one in order to make it a financial success, would necessarily have to keep it modern in every respect and in good repair, with adequate railway sidings and connections to trunk lines as well as maintaining docks and roads in usable condition.

By act approved March 7, 1927, the Port Raritan District Commission was authorized "to straighten South river, in the County of Middlesex, by construction and dredging of new channels and by such other work as may be necessary to accomplish the said purposes." There was also authorized to be appropriated for this purpose the sum of \$200,000.00 when included in any annual or supplemental appropriation bill. The Legislature of 1928 provided the sum of \$75,000.00 as a start towards the carrying out of the provisions of

this act. The entire amount appropriated will be expended by January 22, 1929, and at this time there will have been removed from South River approximately 300,000 cubic yards of material and the channel improved for about 5,000 feet.

The Commission was particularly gratified at the bids received for this work,—the contract having been awarded at a figure of eighteen cents per cubic yard of excavation.

There is needed \$125,000.00, which is the balance of the authorized appropriation, to complete the work in the upper part of South River. As the work can be done cheaper and more satisfactorily if the entire amount is made available, it is requested that there be included in the annual appropriation bill to be passed at this session of the Legislature the sum of \$125,000.00.

The great economic benefit which will come to the central portion of New Jersey by reason of this improvement is already making itself felt, and the Commission believes that this project, when completed, will prove itself worth many times its actual cost.

One of the largest and most important rivers of the State of New Jersey is the Raritan River, which is navigable from Raritan Bay to New Brunswick.

For more than one hundred years the Raritan River has been an important artery of commerce. Articles of all descriptions originating or destined for all parts of the world have passed over it. With the building of the Delaware and Raritan Canal from New Brunswick to Bordentown its importance as a waterway was again emphasized. Gradually, however, due to the attitude of the present lessee of the canal and the control exercised by this lessee on freight rates on the canal, commerce over the canal has been considerably diminished. The Raritan River, however, still continues to be important and in the past few years there has been a rapid increase in tonnage carried on this waterway.

Some years ago there was formed a steam packet company known as the Middlesex Transportation Company for the purpose of carrying goods from New Brunswick and the central portion of New Jersey to New York by water. This company has operated successfully ever since its formation and in the past year there was delivered to it a new boat of twice the capacity of the steamers formerly operated by it. This new boat is too large to go through the Delaware and Raritan Canal and has as its New Brunswick terminal the New Brunswick Municipal Dock which has been erected just below the first lock of the Delaware and Raritan Canal and at the head of

navigation of the Raritan River. This dock shows conclusively the firm opinion which exists in the minds of the City Commission of New Brunswick as to the need of water transportation. There is being expended in the building of this dock and the warehouse facilities accompanying it approximately \$300,000.00. Contracts already made between the city and private companies make this municipal dock a paying proposition.

The Port Raritan Commission realizing that commerce on the Raritan River warrants an improved channel secured a provision for a survey of this river and there was submitted to Congress at its opening in December, 1928, by the Secretary of War, the report of the Chief of Engineers recommending that the present channel dimensions in the Raritan River be changed, and that a channel ten feet deep where bottom is mud and eleven feet deep where the bottom is rock be dredged. The requested improvement was for a channel fifteen feet deep, but the Commission feels that this change in project which when completed and old project finished will cost about \$280,000.00, is nevertheless a step forward in the right direction and that in a few years the government will realize that the economic need exists for a wider and deeper channel, and that at that time we will be able to show by the increased commerce which will undoubtedly result from this improved channel that the improvement originally requested is economically justified.

The favorable report made to Congress for a twenty-five foot channel from main division channel in Raritan Bay to the deep pool above the New York and Long Branch Railroad Bridge at Perth Amboy was referred to the committee on Rivers and Harbors of the House of Representatives. At a hearing held before this Committee facts showing the need for this improvement were presented by the Engineer and Counsel of this Commission. It was approved by the Committee and incorporated in the Rivers and Harbors bill, which is now pending. There is no doubt but that this improvement, which will be at a cost of approximately \$173,000.00 will be in the bill when passed. It is also hoped by the Commission that prompt action can be secured from the Committee on Rivers and Harbors of the House of Representatives for the inclusion in this bill of the change mentioned above in the channel in the Raritan River from Washington Canal to New Brunswick.

Woodbridge River, although smaller than either the Raritan or South Rivers, is important because of the large amount of commerce which is carried on it, and the Commission is attempting to secure a

change in project in this waterway. A favorable report was recently made by the District Engineer which report, however, was not concurred in by the Division Engineer and the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors to whom the matter was referred, also refused to approve the project, but gave the Commission and others interested the opportunity to appear before them at a hearing which was held at Washington, on December 4, 1928. The Port Raritan District Commission was represented by several of its members and by its Counsel. No decision has as yet been rendered by the Board.

Another very important work has been placed upon the Commission by the 1928 Legislature in Chapter 22 of the Laws of 1928, a copy of which statute appears in the appendix to this report. This act authorized the Port Raritan District Commission "to cause an investigation to be made of the pollution of the Raritan river, with a view to ascertaining whether waters of the said Raritan river are being polluted in such manner as to cause or threaten injury to any of the inhabitants of this State, either in health, comfort or property, and if such investigation discloses that the said waters are being so polluted, to prepare a comprehensive plan for the purification of the said Raritan river." There is authorized to be appropriated the sum of \$15,000.00 when included in any annual or supplemental appropriation bill.

As mentioned in our last report Dr. Willem Rudolfs, Chief of Department of Water Supply and Sewage Disposal, Rutgers University, was retained by the Commission to make a preliminary investigation of the pollution in the river. After studying the facts presented in the first reports rendered by him, the above bill was introduced. A very comprehensive report was later submitted by him to the Commission which report, because of its technical nature and the number of graphs and diagrams which it contains, has not been printed but mimeographed copies are available for those interested. The report has aroused the Port Raritan District Commission and those residents of the central portion of New Jersey who are familiar with it to the need of taking definite steps towards the removal of pollution in the Raritan. The report as presented by Dr. Rudolfs clearly shows the extent of the pollution, and the need of finding an immediate remedy.

The Commission was, however, unable to proceed any further in its investigation of pollution because of limited funds, and it is respectfully requested that as the Port Raritan Commission is familiar with the subject of pollution in the Raritan River and has taken the

lead in the matter, that there be appropriated the sum authorized by Chapter 22 P. L. 1928 in order that the survey already made may be amplified and actual plans made for the removal of pollution and the consequent threat of injury to the inhabitants of this State in health, comfort and property.

Your attention is again called to the great need for a ship canal across the State of New Jersey. This need is increasing, not diminishing. The intercoastal waterways system is practically completed with the exception of this very important link across our State.

The Commission believes that a large amount of its success in the projects which it has undertaken has been due to the intelligent cooperation which has been received from your honorable body and various committees with which the Commission has come in contact. The State Board of Commerce and Navigation, Port of New York Authority, Budget Commission and other public and civic bodies have also aided to a considerable degree, as well as New Jersey's Senators and Representatives in Congress.

In conclusion the Port Raritan District Commission wishes to emphasize the importance, not only of the waterways lying within its territory, but of all waterways in the State of New Jersey. It believes that the great development in the Port of New York and the congestion now existing in that port can only be solved by the providing of adequate water facilities in territories adjacent to New York. There is no reason why New Jersey, with its fine coast line and its natural geographical advantages should not be the place to be benefited by the desire for more room and adequate transportation facilities.

Respectfully submitted,

PORT RARITAN DISTRICT COMMISSION,

By RUSSELL E. WATSON, *Chairman.*

## APPENDIX

### CHAPTER 22

(P. L. 1928 Pg. 36)

An Act authorizing the Port Raritan District Commission to investigate the pollution of the Raritan river and to prepare a plan for the purification of the Raritan river and making an appropriation therefor.

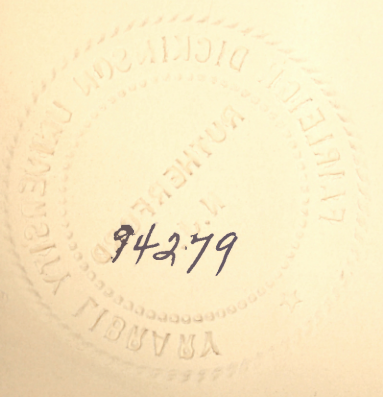
Be it enacted by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. The Port Raritan District Commission is hereby authorized to cause an investigation to be made of the pollution of the Raritan river, with a view to ascertaining whether waters of the said Raritan river are being polluted in such manner as to cause or threaten injury to any of the inhabitants of this State, either in health, comfort or property, and if such investigation discloses that the said waters are being so polluted, to prepare a comprehensive plan for the purification of the said Raritan river.

2. The sum of fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000.00) or as much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated when included in any annual or supplemental appropriation bill, for the carrying out of this act.

3. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved March 6, 1928.



DATE DUE

