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

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JANUARY 21, 1930

THIRD ANNUAL REPORT  
OF  
PORT RARITAN DISTRICT COMMISSION

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January 21, 1930

## EXPLANATORY NOTE

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The Port Raritan District Commission was created by the 1926 New Jersey Legislature (Chapter 337 P. L. 1926). The Commissioners are nine in number and have the jurisdiction and powers set out in this act.

The Port Raritan District consists of Middlesex County, together with the Raritan River from the head of navigation at New Brunswick to Raritan Bay and all other lands and waters of Raritan Bay and the Arthur Kill contiguous thereto. It is one of the three port commissions in the State of New Jersey, the best known and oldest of which is the port commission formed in conjunction with the State of New York known as the Port of New York Authority. The other port commission is the South Jersey Port Commission which includes Trenton and the important Camden section and all of South Jersey.

## REPORT

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TO THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

In this, its third annual report, the Port Raritan District Commission respectfully presents to the Legislature a detailed and we hope, interesting summary of its accomplishments and the progress made since its report of last year.

Sketching briefly the year's events, we report the practical completion of the State's part in the dredging and improvement of South River,—the removal of a large quantity of dangerous explosives from Raritan Arsenal,—the filing with Congress by the Chief of Engineers of a favorable report covering the government's part in the South River,—favorable decision by Chief of Engineer's relative to improvement of Woodbridge Creek,—satisfactory progress of engineers engaged in pollution survey,—filing with Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors of favorable report of District Engineer for New Jersey Ship Canal connecting at Old Bridge with South River, and the introduction in Congress of bill authorizing survey for proposed cut-off channel at Perth Amboy.

The South River improvement project has been practically consummated so far as the State's part in it is concerned. The importance of the improvement of this waterway was stressed in our reports of January 17, 1928, and January 21, 1929. Very satisfactory prices for dredging were obtained by the Commission and the work was satisfactorily performed in accordance with the terms of the contracts and the specifications as prepared by the Resident Engineer of this Commission.

Under date of June 19, 1929, the Secretary of War submitted to the Speaker of the House of Representatives the report of the Chief of Engineers made in pursuance to the River and Harbor Act approved January 21, 1927. This report is complete in every detail and recommends a modification of the existing project for South River, N. J., so as to provide for a channel twelve feet deep and one hundred feet wide in Washington Canal and twelve feet deep and generally one hundred and fifty feet wide in South River, at an estimated cost to the United States of \$90,000.00 with \$8,000.00 annually for maintenance, provided that local interests give assurance satisfactory to the Secretary of War and the Chief of Engineers that they will

dredge a channel twelve feet deep and generally on hundred and fifty feet wide between the highway bridge at South River and Old Bridge, N. J.

The Washington Canal referred to in this report is an artificial waterway which was constructed about seventy-five years ago by private interests and connects the upper part of South River with the Raritan River. The purpose of this canal was to eliminate the necessity of navigating the shallow and tortuous channel of the lower part of South River. The requirement as to assurances from local interests for the dredging of a channel in the upper part of the river has, of course, been adequately cared for by Chapter 31 of the Pamphlet Laws of 1927 and the appropriations included in the annual appropriation bills of 1928 and 1929 being \$75,000.00 and \$100,000.00 respectively.

The government report provides that the channel in South River shall follow a new course known as "cut-off number 1." This cut-off straightens a bad bend in the river near the Borough of South River. A contract for the necessary property to be acquired for this has been entered into between the Port Raritan District Commission and the Sayre and Fisher Brick Company, the owner of the land involved. By this contract the brick company is obligated to convey the necessary land without payment of any monetary consideration.

While we are unable to set out the exact figures as to the increase in commerce since the completion of the dredging done under the two appropriations from the State of New Jersey, yet, we are informed by users of the river that they have been able to load their boats to a much greater capacity and that substantial savings have been effected. It is interesting to note that the report of Major General Edgar Jadwin, Chief of Engineers, states "the capacity of some of the plants" referring to the industries located on South River, "is expected to be doubled, the tonnage of others largely increased, and new industries established. At a saving of twenty-five cents per ton, the total saving on a traffic of 320,000 tons would amount to \$80,000.00 annually." In this report are given the statistics showing commerce on the river and it is estimated by the Army Engineers that during the past three years the commerce moving over the South River and Washington Canal has averaged 250,000 tons annually. From the information obtained by the Commission, this figure would appear to be a very conservative one.

Under the old project depth of eight feet deep through Washington Canal to South River a distance of one and one-half miles and

six feet deep to Old Bridge, a distance of four and eight-tenths miles it was impossible for shippers to load the type of barges now in use in the New York area to more than approximately sixty percent of capacity, and barges which formerly carried six hundred tons will now be able to load eight hundred to one thousand tons.

The benefits which already can be seen from the improvement as thus far completed, have shown conclusively that the opinion of the Commission that an improved channel in South River was economically desirable and necessary was correct and the recognition of the merit in this improvement by the Budget Commission and the Legislature is being well sustained. Already several industries on these waterways have increased the size of their plants and the figures showing commerce on South River and Washington Canal for 1929, which are not as yet available, will, from present indications show a very large increase.

Another very interesting development has occurred recently in the recommendation of Colonel R. T. Ward, Second District Engineer, U. S. Army, that the proposed New Jersey Ship Canal run from Bordentown on the Delaware River to Old Bridge, Middlesex County, New Jersey, connecting at that place with South River and the Washington Canal and from thence, through the Raritan River to Raritan Bay and the New York and New Jersey channels. The millions of tons of commerce which would use these waterways would undoubtedly cause a flourishing industrial boom in the entire Port Raritan District and the location in the district of many new industries and the increase in size and capacity of present plants.

For the first time in many years, if not ever, there have been shipments of stone for road building purposes made to the head of navigation of South River at Old Bridge. Shipments from concerns located on this waterway have not been delayed at all, while prior to the dredging and improvement of the upper part of the channel there were often periods of time lasting occasionally as long as three days when because of poor tides and weather conditions it was impossible to use the channel at the depth and condition in which it was then.

The report of the Chief of Engineers above mentioned has been referred to the Committee on Rivers and Harbors of the House of Representatives and it is expected that a hearing will be held by this committee very shortly. In view of the co-operation given by the State of New Jersey and the very favorable data furnished by this Commission to the District Engineer and incorporated in his report,

it is confidentially expected that the Rivers and Harbors Committee will report the change in project favorably, and that it will be included in the Rivers and Harbors bill, which it is expected will be passed at this session of Congress.

Even if the recommendation of Colonel R. T. Ward as to the use of South River and the Washington Canal as part of the New Jersey Ship Canal is not followed, it seems logical to expect that with the ship canal passing so near the head of navigation of South River that it would be connected with it and thus bring to the area around South River and the Raritan all the benefits of a quick, safe and easy route by water to Philadelphia and from thence south through the inland coastal waterways system.

The suggested use of South River and Washington Canal as a part of the inland waterways system seems to us to again warrant the calling of attention to Raritan Arsenal as the logical location of a large commercial terminal and warehousing center, and in this connection we wish to repeat, as part of this report, the following paragraph which appeared in the report of this Commission to the Legislature under date of January 21, 1929:—

“It is still our firm belief, however, that the true and proper use for Raritan Arsenal is 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.”

The first step toward the accomplishment of this was the removal from Raritan Arsenal of most of the explosives stored there. This was considered absolutely necessary as a safety measure, in view of the proximity of this arsenal to large centers of population.

New Jersey's representatives in Congress are to be congratulated on the capable work which they did in this connection. Congressman Harold G. Hoffman of the Third Congressional District, in which Raritan Arsenal is located, has advised this Commission of receipt of information from Major General C. C. Williams, Chief of Ordnance, to the effect that during 1929, 6,905 tons of explosives

had been removed from Raritan Arsenal and that there still remains to be removed 848 tons of other ammunition and that of this quantity 345 tons, it is expected, will be shipped within a few days. This was under date of January 15th, 1930. General Williams also states “with restorage now in progress the material remaining at Raritan Arsenal will comply with all New Jersey State regulations.”

Of course, there are other areas available for use as commercial terminals and warehousing centers and which undoubtedly could be made quite as useful for these purposes as Raritan Arsenal, but there is no one single tract which has the many transportation facilities already available and in working order. The possibility of the government retaining a small section of the Arsenal for use for purposes other than the storage of explosives and the turning over of the remainder of the Arsenal property for commercial enterprises is probably worthy of study. The Port Raritan Commission firmly believes that while restriction in appropriations for new naval ships may be wise, yet there are other ways in which curtailment of appropriations for defense purposes may be just as well made and that not the least of these is putting to productive use government property such as Raritan Arsenal.

Almost since the organization of the Commission it has been interested in the improvement of Woodbridge Creek. This waterway extends from the Arthur Kill through the Township of Woodbridge and was formerly navigable to Berry Street, Woodbridge. For some time, however, the concerns located on this waterway have been able to use only the lower part to any adequate degree. A survey provision was included in a recent Rivers and Harbors bill. The District Engineer, after making a preliminary investigation, reported unfavorably on a request for an increased depth of project to ten feet. A hearing was then held by the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors and after the submission of additional data by the Port Raritan District Commission at this hearing, the matter was again referred to the District Engineer. A report was made by him and the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors later disapproved the change in project. Then an attempt was made to secure the improvement of the channel to the present project depth of eight feet and during the summer of 1929, maintenance funds were made available so that the channel was dredged up to Cutters Dock, at a cost to the United States Government of approximately \$10,000.00. An effort was then made to have the improvement continued to Berry Street so that waterway transportation facilities would be available

in the center of the developed section of Woodbridge. The government finally granted the request of the Commission, provided, that the Township of Woodbridge constructed an adequate hard surfaced road to the dock at the end of Berry Street, and place the dock in usable condition. The Township Committee of Woodbridge had already signified their willingness to do this and it is expected that this improvement will be consummated this year.

By Chapter 22 of the Laws of 1928, the Port Raritan District Commission was authorized to investigate the pollution of the Raritan River and to prepare a plan for the purification of this waterway. There was authorized for the purpose of carrying out the terms of this act, an appropriation of \$15,000.00 when included in any annual or supplemental appropriation bill.

The 1929 Legislature included in its appropriations for the Port Raritan District Commission the sum of \$15,000.00 for this purpose, and a contract was made with the firm of Remington, Vosbury and Goff for an engineering survey to determine the proper plan and method for the correction of the extensive pollution which was shown to exist in the Raritan River. Prior to this contract this Commission had a preliminary investigation of the sources and extent of pollution made by Dr. Willem Rudolfs, Chief of Department of Water Supply and Sewage Disposal of Rutgers University.

The engineers making the engineering survey are using, as the beginning point of their work, the survey made by Dr. Rudolfs which was completed in the summer of 1928. Their progress has been very satisfactory but because of the size and importance of the survey, a complete report is not available at this time. Most of the preliminary work such as preparation of drainage maps of the Raritan Drainage District and maps on larger scale of the various municipalities located in the district have been completed. Remington, Vosbury and Goff report, however, that additional field work is required before final recommendations can be made.

From present indications and preliminary reports submitted to our Commission it would appear that a trunk sewer such as was constructed by the Passaic Valley Sewage Commission is not the proper method for the solution of the pollution problem in the Raritan District, and it is expected that when the entire report has been completed that it will show that the logical and proper way is the construction of plants for the treatment and disposal of sewage,—these plants to be located at various points in the Raritan District.

In a report dated November, 1929, Colonel R. T. Ward, District Engineer for the Second New York District, submitted to the War Department data and recommendations on the New Jersey Ship Canal. This report was furnished in accordance with a resolution of the Committee on Rivers and Harbors of the House of Representatives. It is not our purpose to set out in detail this very comprehensive and interesting report. We do wish, however, to call to the attention of the Legislature that the State of New Jersey has already actually pledged itself to the furnishing of a right of way for this canal. The legislation covering this subject is more fully set out in letter from J. Spencer Smith, President of Board of Commerce and Navigation to the Honorable A. Harry Moore, then Governor, under date of February 11, 1928. We are informed that the District Engineer estimates the total cost of the New Jersey Ship Canal at \$93,047,000.00, and the estimated annual maintenance at \$500,000.00, and that the probable cost of rights of way and satisfaction of other claims which may be expected to be made by reason of this canal will be \$4,036,000.00.

The importance of this link in the Intra-coastal Water Way cannot be over-emphasized. We respectfully point out that this is the last section of waterway necessary to complete the system from Boston to Florida. At the present time, going from Boston, we pass through the Cape Cod Canal and down to New York Bay, then we are compelled to seek the outside route around New Jersey. After reaching Delaware Bay, it is possible to continue on to Florida by way of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, the waterway from Norfolk, Virginia, to Beaufort, North Carolina, then we strike the uncompleted link now under construction from Beaufort to Cape Fear River, then from Cape Fear River to Charleston, on which link there has already been a favorable report to Congress, from Charleston to Beaufort, South Carolina, is in operation as well as the link from Beaufort, South Carolina, to St. Johns River, Florida. A further part of this waterway extending from Jacksonville, Florida, to Miami, has also been authorized by Congress, and there is now under investigation by special board the possibility of building a canal from Cumberland, Georgia, to the Mississippi River, connecting there with an authorized project from New Orleans to Corpus Christi, Texas.

In our opinion, the above emphasizes probably more than any other argument the necessity and the importance of the link across New Jersey.

The Atlantic Deeper Waterways Association conducted a thorough and searching investigation to determine the amount of commerce which might be expected to use the New Jersey Ship Canal. In 1927 this association estimated, as a result of this investigation, that there would be a total commerce of 12,625,000 tons.

The Port Raritan District Commission is interested in the New Jersey Ship Canal not only because the Commission believes that it will be of unestimatable benefit to the State of New Jersey but, because of its importance as a link in the inland transportation system, which cannot help but aid in increasing and maintaining the prosperity of the entire eastern section of the United States.

A part of the proposed route for the New Jersey Ship Canal lies in the Port Raritan District and we firmly believe that the economic benefits which this district would reap from the construction of such a canal are well worth favorable consideration for this project.

Costs of right of way are increasing and we urge that definite action be taken by the New Jersey Legislature at this session and that in order that such action may be intelligently directed, that a Committee be appointed to study the various provisions of the New Jersey statutes dealing with this canal, and that this committee also confer with the departments of the United States Government interested, and report back to this Legislature.

There has been introduced in Congress by Honorable Harold G. Hoffman, at the request of this Commission, a bill providing for a preliminary examination and survey in Raritan Bay and the Arthur Kill, with a view to the construction of a cut-off channel near Perth Amboy. In the opinion of the Commission, this channel will effectuate, if and when completed, a material saving to all commerce proceeding down the Raritan en route to New York.

No further definite action has taken place so far as the project for the improvement of the channel in the Raritan River from Washington Canal to the head of navigation at New Brunswick and in Raritan Bay from the main division channel in the Bay to the deep pool above the New York and Long Branch Railroad Bridge at Perth Amboy. As appears in our report of January 21, 1929, favorable recommendation by the Chief of Engineers for the improvement of the Raritan River to a depth of ten feet in soft material and eleven feet in rock, was submitted to Congress by the Chief of Engineers. The estimated cost of this improvement is \$280,000.00. In the lower part of the Raritan, the proposition there is for a twenty five foot channel at an estimated cost of \$173,000.00. This project

has already received the approval of a former Rivers and Harbors Committee and it is understood that the present committee will include it in the new Rivers and Harbors bill without any further discussion.

We confidently anticipate favorable action by the Rivers and Harbors Committee of the House of Representatives on the improved Raritan River channel, and expect that the bill, when reported by this committee, will include the two projects last above mentioned as well as that for the improvement of South River.

A renewed interest in the South Amboy Reclamation project, which was considered more fully in our reports filed with the Legislatures of 1928 and 1929 has been shown by the property owners involved and efforts are being made to place this proposition on a sound footing so that if possible, there will be consummated an improvement which will probably change the entire future of the area benefited. A committee, of which the Honorable William S. Dey is Chairman is working in conjunction with a committee from the property owners on this project.

Many other matters in connection with port development and waterway transportation have interested your Commission during the past year, such as the increase in Perth Amboy quarantine area, the improvement and proposed change in south channel of the Raritan River and other matters of a similar nature. The usual routine work of the Port Commission has been handled in a highly satisfactory manner by Mr. C. S. Atkinson, Secretary, and an office has been maintained in the National Bank of New Jersey Building, New Brunswick, N. J., which has been open during the regular business hours. Regular monthly meetings have been held by the Commission as well as a number of special meetings, and inspections made of the various projects on which the Commission has been working, including an inspection of the new New Brunswick Municipal Dock, which is now successfully in operation and is a fine example of what can be accomplished by municipalities for the aid of water transportation. This dock is a paying proposition and is well worth study by any municipality contemplating a similar undertaking.

We anticipate that 1930 will stand out as a year in which more will be accomplished for the development of waterway transportation in our district than at any other time. We believe that we are on the eve of the actual starting of work in the improvement of channels for which the Commission has been working since its organization. We do not wish to close this report, however, without expressing to

the Legislature and the other state officials with whom we have had contact and to the officers of the United States Engineers and to Congressman Hoffman, our appreciation for their co-operation without which the diligent and intelligent work which we think we have done would have been useless.

The development of adequate waterways and transportation facilities is becoming more and more important, not only in the Port Raritan District, but in the State of New Jersey as a whole, and we can only reiterate our firm conviction that the future of New Jersey depends, to a large extent, upon the interest which our State Government takes in the waterways of New Jersey.

Respectfully submitted,

PORT RARITAN DISTRICT COMMISSION,

By RUSSELL E. WATSON, *Chairman.*

## STATUTES

### CHAPTER 337

(P. L. 1926 Pg 767)

*Passed April 1, 1926*

An Act to create the Port Raritan District and to provide for the appointment of the Port Raritan District Commission and the vesting in the commission of appropriate powers and making an appropriation for the expenses of the commission.

### CHAPTER 338

(P. L. 1926 Pg 772)

*Passed April 1, 1926*

An Act authorizing the governing body of any county, borough, city, township or other municipality in this State to raise, appropriate, set aside and devote money or property to the use of any port, harbor, bridge or river commission now or hereafter created by the Legislature of this State and giving to any such local governing body property to the use of any port, harbor or river commission now or hereafter created by the Legislature of this State and giving to any such local governing body the power to prescribe the terms and conditions upon which any such money or property shall be held and used.

### CHAPTER 31

(P. L. 1927 Pg 70)

*Approved March 7, 1927*

An Act authorizing the Port Raritan District Commission to straighten South river, in the county of Middlesex, and making an appropriation therefor.

### CHAPTER 22

(P. L. 1928 Pg 36)

*Approved March 6, 1928*

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.



