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To: Logan, Dennis
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GOVERNOR CHRISTIE, DEP ACTING COMMISSIONER MARTIN OUTRAGED BY ARMY CORPS' TREATMENT OF SOUTH JERSEY IN DELAWARE DEEPENING

(10/P8) TRENTON * Governor Chris Christie and Department of Environmental Protection Acting Commissioner Bob Martin today expressed outrage over the Army Corps of Engineers' plans to start the deepening of the Delaware River's main shipping channel without updating sediment studies, providing alternatives to disposing dredged sediments in South Jersey or implementing measures to prevent dredging equipment from polluting the air.

"It is irresponsible for the Army Corps to push this dredging project forward when we know South Jersey will suffer the consequences," Governor Christie said. "The Army Corps is using a double standard, applying tough criteria to protect the environment during the project to deepen the New York-New Jersey Harbor yet failing to provide the same protections to South Jersey's environment during the proposed deepening of the Delaware."

Army Corps studies for the Delaware River deepening project are more than a dozen years old, yet more recent monitoring of Army Corps disposal facilities indicates elevated levels of contaminants in effluent. In addition, the Army Corps has failed to provide alternatives to dumping most of the dredged sediments in South Jersey.

"The Army Corps is using poor and obsolete data to make big decisions that affect New Jersey," Commissioner Martin said. "We have very deep concerns about the old scientific data the Army Corps has been using to push this project ahead. We demand a fresh look using current data and testing methods, and then we'll see if this project is as ecologically benign as the Army Corps purports it to be."

In the project to deepen the New York-New Jersey Harbor, the Army Corps updated scientific data and applied project-specific testing protocols. It also worked with the project sponsor to improve air quality. The sponsor purchased low-pollution engines for tugboats and ferries.

For the Delaware River project, the Army Corps wants to purchase air credits from other polluters to offset smog-causing pollutants emitted by its boats and equipment. The Army Corps refuses to discuss options to credits or update its air-pollution analysis.

"We want real steps to protect the health of people who live and work along the river," Commissioner Martin said. "We don't want paper credits that don't actually eliminate any pollution."

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The Army Corps has not updated a number of environmental studies for the Delaware deepening project since 1997, including evaluations of the effects of the project on the region's wetlands, water supplies and wildlife. The Army Corps also failed to address the potential impacts of a massive oil spill in 2004 on the river sediments.

The Army Corps has proposed deepening the Delaware's 40-foot shipping channel to 45 feet from Camden to the mouth of Delaware Bay, a distance of more than 100 miles. The project will produce millions of tons of sediments that will need disposal.

Most of the dredged sediments will be dumped at federal disposal sites in New Jersey. The DEP wants a sediment sampling program for the Delaware River similar to one the Army Corps used for the New York Harbor deepening project.

New Jersey is pursuing legal action in the U.S. District Court of New Jersey challenging the Army Corps' decision to move ahead with the project and intervened in an action filed by the state of Delaware.

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