

Army Corps Continues Progress on Rahway River Feasibility Study

NEW YORK – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) are currently evaluating several flood risk management alternatives for the Rahway River Basin, with the preliminary findings to be shared with area residents at two public information sessions to be scheduled in late May or early June 2014.

Included in the discussion will be preliminary economic analyses that have been completed by the Army Corps regarding flood risk management alternatives that are being reviewed as part of a long-term look at the river basin and potential steps that could be taken to alleviate flood impacts.

flood-impacted communities were briefed on the initial findings at a private meeting on March 31 at the Army Corps' New York Region headquarters. Two subsequent public information sessions will be scheduled for late spring in Rahway River Basin towns.

The entire briefing, including more information about the ongoing study in general, detailed descriptions of the alternatives evaluated and preliminary benefit-to-cost ratios for each alternative is available for download as a PDF online at www.nan.usace.army.mil/Rahway.

Any alternative considered for further study must undergo further analysis before a tentatively selected plan can be chosen. Alternatives selected for further analysis will be evaluated to formally assess potential environmental and cultural impacts through further field investigations and following the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes, as well as optimization to further refine the particulars of each flood risk management element. Completion of the study is also dependent upon future federal funding.

Holt or Staff to Hold Community Office Hours June 12 in FW

REGION – U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (D-12th) has announced an upcoming series of "Community Office Hours" in towns throughout Central New Jersey.

Rep. Holt or members of his staff will be available to assist residents who are having problems with Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, the Veterans Affairs, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, or any other federal agency. Staff also will be available to provide information on federal grants and contracts, acquiring flags flown over the U.S. Capitol, and more.

The office hours are intended to provide an easy, accessible way for residents to receive help. Those who are unable to attend may seek assistance at any time by calling 1-877-RUSH-HOLT (1-877-874-4658).

Community Office Hours will run from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at each location. In Union County, they will be held Thursday, June 12, at the Fanwood Memorial Library, North Avenue and Tillotson Road, and Wednesday, June 18, at the Plainfield Public Library, 800 Park Avenue.

No single alternative has been selected for construction at this point and the study is ongoing.

"The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in close partnership with our local sponsors, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, is committed to continuing to evaluate flood risk management alternatives for the Rahway River Basin as we work toward implementing a flood risk management project that will help reduce risks to communities in the basin that have experienced significant flooding over the years," Army Corps' New York District Commander Col. Paul Owen said.

"New Jersey will continue to work closely with the Army Corps as it moves forward in reviewing various aspects of each of these alternatives and works with local communities to determine a best flood risk management option," NJ DEP Commissioner Bob Martin said.

Narrowing the alternatives will be partly based on the comparisons of benefits and costs between different plans that were developed by the Army Corps.

The Benefit-to-Cost ratios are based on estimated benefits, including damages prevented during modeled storm events, and estimated costs, including cost of initial construction and long-term operations and maintenance. This ratio is critical to determining whether a project would be economically justified and be implementable. At this stage, an alternative must have a benefit-to-cost ratio of approximately 1.0 or higher in order to meet economic requirements to be considered a feasible alternative.

Elected officials and stakeholders from

Turnpike Toll Cut Sought During Pulaski Shutdown

TRENTON – As the state Department of Transportation (DOT) shut down the Pulaski Skyway for a two-year repair project beginning this past weekend, Assemblymen Joseph Cryan (D-20th, Union Twp.) and Jason O'Donnell (D-31st, Bayonne) are proposing a toll reduction along a portion of the New Jersey Turnpike to compensate commuters who will be forced to travel a more expensive and congested route in the interim.

The lawmakers plan to introduce legislation requiring the New Jersey Turnpike Authority to reduce, by half, the tolls at Exits 14, 14a, 14b, 14c, and 15e on the Turnpike extension until the Pulaski Skyway reopens.

"While the DOT, recognizing 'carnageddon' is coming, has developed a number of alternate plans for commuters, it acknowledges that a big part of the plan is to move people to the Turnpike extension," Asm. Cryan said. "This additional cost could be very significant for many people. Reducing toll fees for the time being might not help eliminate travel headaches, but it will at least lessen the blow financially for commuters."

Union and Hudson county commuters will absorb a majority of the blow as DOT officials warn that an estimated 40,000 motorists who take the Pulaski Skyway to Manhattan and Jersey City daily have been forced to find an alternate route.

The DOT has announced plans to

include more train capacity and is urging motorists to carpool, take public transportation or use alternate routes. However, of the 3,500 cars that travel to Manhattan on the Pulaski Skyway every hour during the morning commute, the DOT expects roughly 1,900 of them to use the Turnpike extension, which cost \$2.45 one-way for the entire eight-mile extension during peak travel times with no E-Z Pass discount offered.

The lawmakers intend to introduce the legislation in early May.

Touch A Truck' Event At Wild Earth Fest

COUNTY – The Union County Department of Parks and Recreation will hold its "Wild Earth Fest" at Trailside Nature and Science Center in Mountainside on Sunday, April 27 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., rain or shine. This year's event will feature the county's first Touch A Truck event, which will take place in the Lower Loop parking lot. Emergency vehicles from the Public Works Department, Union County Police Department, Hazmat, Mountainside Fire Department and the county Sheriff's Department will be on display.

Admission to Wild Earth Fest is \$4 per person, with children 6 and under admitted free. For information, call (908) 789-3670 or visit www.ucnj.org/trailside.



IMPORTANCE OF A WILL... Union County Surrogate James LaCorte speaks to members of the Vauxhall senior citizen group about the importance of having a legal will during a recent meeting at the Union Township Community Action Center. For more information about a legal will or if to arrange a date to have the Surrogate speak before a club or organization, call (908) 527-4280 or visit www.ucnj.org/government/surrogate.

GWACC Seeks New Executive Director

WESTFIELD – The Greater Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce (GWACC) has announced that Executive Director Heather Robinson will be leaving her position.

"The board would like to thank her for her service and dedication over the last year-and-a-half," according to a GWACC press release.

The Chamber's day-to-day activities will continue as usual, including the upcoming street fairs, Spring Fling

in Westfield on Sunday, May 4, and Garwood Rocks in Garwood on Sunday, June 8. A search committee is currently seeking applications for the executive director position. "We look forward to building on the solid foundation that has been put in place to achieve success with Chamber activities and programs," according to the release. For more information, contact GWACC Chairman Chris Devine at (908)789-7816.

Assembly Majority Must Extend Two Percent Interest Arbitration Cap

TRENTON -- Senate Minority Leader Tom Kean Jr., (R-21st, Westfield) issued the following statement on Monday after joining Governor Chris Christie, state and local elected leaders in urging the Assembly Majority to take action on legislation extending the 2-percent interest arbitration award cap:

"The Senate Republican Caucus stands with Governor Christie in urging the passage of this bipartisan legislation to extend the 2-percent cap on arbitration awards. It's no coincidence that under the cap, contracts and property taxes grew at the lowest levels in decades. Unfortunately, we now stand to lose the progress we have made. How can we expect municipalities to hold down costs if there's no ability to control arbitration awards for police and fire salaries?"

"Failing to extend the cap now will wipe out the momentum gained in controlling property taxes from the historic reforms we all enacted together just a few years ago and decrease towns' ability to provide the services so many depend on. Any contracts awarded now outside the cap could hamstring municipalities for years into the future. The Senate has come together once again on a bipartisan basis to approve this cap extension because we understand it's the best thing for the taxpayers we all

represent. It's time for the Assembly Majority to come to the table and do what we all know is right. The consequence of failing to act is far too high."

'Path to Prosperity' to Balance The Budget

Editor's Note: The following statement by Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7th) follows House passage of House Concurrent Resolution 96, the "Path to Prosperity" plan crafted by House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-Wis.).

 "The budget blueprint passed [Thursday] includes important pro-growth policies that will harness domestic energy, restore patient-centered health care, strengthen retirement and the safety net programs that are so essential, and it will reform our tax code — all without raising taxes on hardworking Americans."

"This is a plan to balance the budget in 10 years and begin to pay down the national debt, which is exactly what our economy needs. I challenge the U.S. Senate not only to pass a budget, but craft a proposal that truthfully addresses our nation's long-term fiscal challenges and spares future generations the burden of trillions of dollars in national debt."

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- CHIANTI RESERVA **9⁹⁹**
- PINOT GRIGIO VENEZIE **7⁹⁹**
- PINOT NOIR VENEZIE **7⁹⁹**
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