



# Upper Delaware Council

PO Box 192, 211 Bridge Street, Narrowsburg, New York 12764-0192 • (Tel.) 845-252-3022 • (Fax) 845-252-3359

William E. Douglass, Executive Director • David B. Soete, Senior Resource Specialist  
Laurie Ramie, Public Relations/Fund Raising Specialist • Carol Coney, Office Manager

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Contact: Laurie Ramie, (845) 252-3022 or [laurie@upperdelawarecouncil.org](mailto:laurie@upperdelawarecouncil.org)

## Commission Approves Replacements and Repairs of Upper Delaware River Bridges

DUNMORE – The New York-Pennsylvania Joint Interstate Bridge Commission approved capital construction and maintenance plans for 10 Upper Delaware River bridges at its annual meeting held May 28 at Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) District 4-0 headquarters in Dunmore.

Representatives from the Upper Delaware Council (UDC) and National Park Service (NPS) Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River attended to hear the plans and provide input.

Contracts to construct new bridges at the 1904 **Pond Eddy, NY-Pond Eddy, PA** and the 1961 **Callicoon, NY-Damascus, PA** crossings are anticipated to be let in 2012 and 2013, respectively.

Major rehabilitation work will be phased in at the 1939 **Port Jervis, NY-Matamoras, PA**, 1901 **Skidders Falls, NY-Milanville, PA**, and 1954 **Narrowsburg, NY-Darbytown, PA** Bridges, starting this summer through 2015.

PennDOT and New York State DOT spent \$425,404 to maintain the 10 Upper Delaware River bridges from April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009, which includes any work done on the structures and approaches, as well as the cost for snow and ice control.

The total included a \$151,976 deck cleaning and repair project at the 1992 **Lordville, NY-Equinunk, PA** Bridge and a similar \$130,517 maintenance project at the 1952 **Cochecton, NY-Damascus, PA** Bridge.

Comparatively, the Commission allocated \$177,245 for maintenance in 2009-2010 based on the recommendations made by the Joint Interstate Bridge Inspection Team that visited all 10 bridges on April 23 to assess their conditions.

### Gas Drilling Impacts

The inspection team's discovery of evidence that oversized trucks have been illegally using the **Kellams, NY-Stalker, PA** Bridge prompted a discussion about the impact that traffic associated with the natural gas drilling industry could have on local bridges.

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### *Working together to conserve the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River*

*Town of Hancock • Town of Fremont • Town of Delaware • Town of Cochecton • Town of Tusten • Town of Highland • Town of Lumberland  
Town of Deerpark • Berlin Township • Damascus Township • Lackawaxen Township • Shohola Township • Westfall Township  
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Engineers reported that the “headache bar” that stands at an eight-foot height over the entrances to the one-lane, steel cable suspension bridge built in 1890 and rehabilitated in 1990 has been repeatedly hit and bent.

DOT installed the bar to deter vehicles that are over the bridge’s 15-ton weight limit from crossing it. Vehicle operators who defy the limit face significant monetary fines if apprehended.

While the suspected culprits are currently logging trucks, NPS Superintendent Vidal Martinez forewarned the commission that the interest by natural gas developers in the Delaware River Basin area’s Marcellus shale resources are likely to present additional bridge stresses in the near future.

NYS DOT Region 9 Director Jack Williams agreed with the legitimacy of the concern, but stated that the companies will have to prove that the bridges can accommodate their equipment in order to obtain their required permits. Otherwise, they would also be operating illegally.

PennDOT District 4-0 Executive George J. Roberts said that he’s aware that natural gas activity is advancing towards the northeast PA region and that his agency must be conscious of it.

“God forbid that we have the worst case situation of a bridge failure,” Roberts said.

As a result of the discussion, Commission Secretary Roberts said that DOT will explore options to post signs at the Kellams-Stalker Bridge detailing the penalties for illegal use of the bridge, contact State Police to request more patrols to increase enforcement, and publicize the weight restrictions.

### **Bridge Replacements**

PennDOT continues to regularly inspect and maintain the 1904 Pond Eddy Bridge while awaiting the completion of the required environmental compliance review. Since 1994, \$3 million has been spent on preliminary engineering and design.

DOT’s recommendation to raze the bridge has raised objections from those who seek to preserve this single-lane, timber-deck, Pennsylvania truss structure listed since 1988 on the National Register of Historic Places.

The bridge provides the only direct access to approximately 26 homes on the PA side, but its seven-ton load capacity prevents most service and emergency vehicles from using it.

The DOT’s engineering study consultants have stated that bridge rehabilitation is not a viable option since it would carry a higher price tag for upfront costs and annual maintenance, yield a shorter life expectancy, take twice as long, fail to achieve modern standards, and alter its historic appearance anyway.

Leaving the current bridge in place while building a new one would create backwater flooding potential by introducing new piers into the river. The DOT’s marketing attempts to find an entity willing and able to move the bridge elsewhere have not been productive.

Debbie Noone, PennDOT District 4-0 Assistant Executive for Design, told commission members, “We optimistically anticipate moving into final design sometime early next year.” The estimated construction cost is \$9 million.

In the meantime, the Commission approved a \$60,000 repair contract for the Pond Eddy Bridge that is due to get underway this summer. Work will include replacing stones that are missing from the nose of the center pier, repairing steel plates, and rehabilitating the bridge’s underpinning structure.

The estimated cost to replace the seven-span Callicoon-Damascus Bridge has increased from last year's projection of \$11.6 million to the 2013 approved allocation of \$13.8 million. The project remains in the preliminary engineering phase. No meetings are scheduled as yet to follow up on the last public input session held on Sept. 12, 2006, when the construction cost was pegged at \$7.7 million.

The new **Barryville, NY-Shohola, PA** Bridge built from 2004-2008 (due to flood delays) to replace a 1941 structure is "99% complete" pending installation of the ornamental railing at the pedestrian overlooks. The final price tag was \$11,620,000.

### **Bridge Repairs**

Extensive work to repair abutment backwalls, steel members, pier expansion dam and to paint the floor beam system on the Port Jervis-Matamoras Bridge will begin in the next few months at a cost of \$2.5 million. DOT will hold off on painting the steel truss members for an additional \$3.4 million in 2015.

In 2012, \$5 million has been earmarked to replace the deck and sidewalks, and paint the Narrowsburg-Darbytown Bridge.

Repair of truss members and abutments at the Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge will get underway next year under an estimated \$200,000 contract. A second phase of full rehabilitation and painting will take place in 2015 for \$8 million.

No repair contracts are currently in the works for the 1937 **Hancock, NY-Buckingham, PA** Bridge that also falls under the jurisdiction of the NY-PA Joint Interstate Bridge Commission.

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