

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 133

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 221st LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 2, 2024

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman MICHAEL INGANAMORT

District 24 (Morris, Sussex and Warren)

Assemblywoman DAWN FANTASIA

District 24 (Morris, Sussex and Warren)

Assemblyman JOHN DIMAIO

District 23 (Hunterdon, Somerset and Warren)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblyman Auth

SYNOPSIS

Opposes all proposals to change designation of Delaware Water Gap from National Recreation Area to National Park and Preserve, including proposal from Delaware River National Park and Lenape Preserve Alliance.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



AR133 INGANAMORT, FANTASIA

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1 **AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION** opposing certain proposals concerning
2 the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

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4 **WHEREAS**, The Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
5 (“Delaware Water Gap”) is a unit of the National Park System
6 located in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, that currently
7 encompasses nearly 70,000 acres, of which 21,978 acres are in
8 Sussex County and 9,222 acres are in Warren County; and

9 **WHEREAS**, The Delaware Water Gap offers numerous recreational
10 opportunities, such as bicycling, bird watching, boating, camping,
11 canoeing, cross country skiing, fishing, hiking, horseback riding,
12 hunting, swimming, walking, and special events, and is home to
13 numerous rare, threatened, and endangered species of plants,
14 amphibians, fish, mammals, and reptiles; and

15 **WHEREAS**, In 2022, and again in 2023 with a revised proposal, the
16 Delaware River National Park and Lenape Preserve Alliance
17 proposed to change the designation of the Delaware Water Gap
18 from a National Recreation Area to a National Park and
19 Preserve, and to expand the area of the present Delaware Water
20 Gap; and

21 **WHEREAS**, The Delaware River National Park and Lenape Preserve
22 Alliance plan to establish the “Delaware River National Park and
23 Lenape Preserve” (“Redesignation Project”), which would
24 include the Delaware Water Gap and the Middle Delaware
25 National Scenic and Recreational River, would limit or prohibit
26 certain recreational activities in certain areas of the park, such as
27 hunting, that are enjoyed by both residents and visitors; and

28 **WHEREAS**, If enacted, such a change would be likely to negatively
29 affect the economic prosperity of businesses in Sussex and Warren
30 counties that benefit substantially from tourism to the Delaware
31 Water Gap, and residents would no longer have the opportunity to
32 enjoy hunting and other recreational activities locally; and

33 **WHEREAS**, The specifics and scope of the Redesignation Project, and
34 the environmental, economic, and agricultural impact of the project
35 remain unknown, including if, and how, fees will be collected, and
36 how the project will be funded; and

37 **WHEREAS**, The Redesignation Project raises concerns that the rights
38 of local property owners will be disregarded, and eminent domain
39 will be used by the federal government to acquire private and State
40 property adjacent to the Delaware Water Gap, including nearby
41 High Point State Park, Stokes State Forest, and Worthington State
42 Forest; and

43 **WHEREAS**, The conversion of private property to federal parkland
44 would result in a reduction of tax revenue in affected
45 municipalities, may negatively affect local school districts in the
46 area, and may negatively affect the local economy by preventing
47 farmers who lease land along the Delaware River from producing
48 crops that feed livestock; and

1 **WHEREAS**, The Redesignation Project may further affect the local
2 economy in a similar manner by potentially prohibiting or
3 restricting recreational activities, including hunting, which will
4 cause local businesses in Sussex and Warren counties to suffer
5 financially, force tourism to other states that offer these
6 activities, and prevent residents from enjoying hunting and other
7 recreational activities locally; and

8 **WHEREAS**, It is fitting and proper for this House to express
9 opposition to proposals, such as the proposal from the Delaware
10 River National Park and Lenape Preserve Alliance, to change the
11 designation of the Delaware Water Gap from a National
12 Recreation Area to a National Park and Preserve and expand the
13 current boundaries of the Delaware Water Gap National
14 Recreation Area, to ensure that the rights of local property
15 owners are protected, to prevent financial and economic losses in
16 the area, and to protect the freedom of local residents and visitors
17 to enjoy all of the recreational activities the Delaware Water Gap
18 has to offer; now, therefore,

19

20 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the General Assembly of the State of New*
21 *Jersey:*

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23 1. This House opposes all proposals to change the designation of
24 the Delaware Water Gap from a National Recreation Area to a
25 National Park and Preserve and to expand the Delaware Water Gap
26 National Recreation Area beyond its current boundaries.

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28 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
29 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to the
30 Governor and Lieutenant Governor of the State of New Jersey, the
31 Secretary of the Interior, the Director of the National Park Service,
32 the Regional Director of the Northeast Region of the National Park
33 Service, every member of Congress elected from this State, and the
34 Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental
35 Protection.

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STATEMENT

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40 This resolution expresses opposition to all proposals to change
41 the designation of the Delaware Water Gap from a National
42 Recreation Area to a National Park and Preserve and expand the
43 current boundaries of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation
44 Area. The Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
45 ("Delaware Water Gap") is a unit of the National Park System
46 located in New Jersey and Pennsylvania that encompasses portions
47 of Sussex and Warren Counties.

1 The Delaware Water Gap offers numerous recreational
2 opportunities that are enjoyed by the residents of Sussex and
3 Warren counties, as well as residents from throughout the State and
4 visitors from across the country. A recently proposed project titled
5 “Delaware Water Gap: Redesignation Project” (“Redesignation
6 Project”) seeks to change the designation of the Delaware Water
7 Gap from a National Recreation Area to the Delaware River
8 National Park and Lenape Preserve, and to expand the area of the
9 present Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. The
10 specifics and scope of the Redesignation Project and the
11 environmental, economic, and agricultural impacts of the project,
12 remain unknown, including if, and how, fees will be collected, and
13 how the project will be funded.

14 In addition, the Redesignation Project raises concerns that the
15 rights of local property owners may be disregarded. It is possible
16 the federal government will use eminent domain to acquire private
17 and State property alongside the Delaware Water Gap National
18 Recreation Area, including nearby High Point State Park, Stokes
19 State Forest, and Worthington State Forest. The conversion of
20 private property to federal property would result in numerous
21 economic ramifications. It would result in a reduction of tax
22 revenue in affected municipalities, may negatively affect local
23 school districts in the area, and may negatively affect the local
24 economy by preventing farmers who lease land along the Delaware
25 River from producing crops that feed livestock.

26 The Redesignation Project may further affect the local economy
27 by prohibiting or restricting recreational activities, including
28 hunting. As stakeholders determined in 2016, prohibiting these
29 recreational activities will cause local businesses in Sussex and
30 Warren counties to suffer financially, and prevent local residents
31 from enjoying hunting and other recreational activities locally.