

Casey, Fetterman, Cartwright, and Wild Press PennDOT and National Park Service to Reopen Route 611

By Congresswoman Susan Wild

HARRISBURG - Road forced to close in December of 2022 due to rockslide; kept closed by lack of coordination between the two agencies

"The inability to find a path forward on the part of the two agencies has kept the road closed for over a year and become a burden on residents, businesses, commuters, and emergency vehicles," the members wrote in a letter

Washington, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senators Bob Casey (D-PA) and John Fetterman (D-PA), and U.S. Representatives Matt Cartwright (D-PA-8) and Susan Wild (D-PA-7) sent a letter to National Park Service Director Charles F. Sams III and Pennsylvania Secretary of Transportation Mike Carroll regarding the ongoing closure of Route 611 in Pennsylvania's Northampton and Monroe Counties. In the letter, the members expressed frustration about how a lack of coordination between the two agencies has led to the road being closed for more than a year, and called for a compromise solution to reopen the road.

"The inability to find a path forward on the part of the two agencies has kept the road closed for over a year and become a burden on residents, businesses, commuters, and emergency vehicles that have had to follow detours around the closure," wrote the members. "We emphasize our collective frustration over this situation and request both PennDOT and NPS come together and find a compromise that satisfies NPS's statutory requirements, prioritizes safety, and reopens Route 611."

Dear Director Sams and Secretary Carroll:

We write today regarding the ongoing closure of Route 611 in Northampton and Monroe Counties, Pennsylvania. This situation has been at a standstill for over a year, and we request your cooperation in seeking a solution as soon as you are able.

As you both know, Route 611 has been closed since December of 2022 after heavy rains led to a rockslide along Mount Minsi, which blocked the road. Since then, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) has been advancing plans to secure the rock face and reopen the road, which requires an Emergency Special Use Permit from the National Park Service (NPS).

We understand that NPS has yet to issue this Emergency Special Use Permit, citing its obligation to adhere to requirements set forth by the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966, as well as concerns with the proposed scope of work. Without the Emergency Special Use Permit, PennDOT has not been able to move forward with the planned course of action it has deemed necessary to reopen the road. The inability to find a path forward on the part of the two agencies has kept the road closed for over a year and become a burden on residents, businesses, commuters, and emergency vehicles that have had to follow detours around the closure.

While we recognize the statutory limitations both parties must navigate, this impasse cannot continue. The Route 611 closure contributes to regional frustrations with government parties seeming unwilling to work together or compromise.

To that end, we emphasize our collective frustration over this situation and request both PennDOT and NPS come together and find a compromise that satisfies NPS's statutory requirements, prioritizes safety, and reopens Route 611.

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Firefighters Grant Application Period Now Open

By Rep. Joe Emrick

BETHLEHEM - The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently announced the application period for the Fiscal Year 2023 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program is now open.

The new funding, which totals \$324 million, can be used for critically needed resources to better equip and train emergency response personnel, enhance operational efficiencies, foster communications interoperability between emergency responders, and support community risk reduction and resilience. In addition, these grants will provide direct financial assistance to eligible fire departments, nonaffiliated emergency medical service organizations and state fire training academies.

Applications must be submitted by Friday, March 8, at 5 p.m. For more information on the AFG program, visit grants.gov.



Apply Now for Community Conservation Grants

By Rep. Joe Emrick

BETHLEHEM - The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Bureau of Recreation and Conservation is now accepting applications for its Community Conservation Partnerships Program.

The grants can be used to fund various planning, acquisition and development of public parks, recreation areas and trails. Grants can also fund river or open space conservation projects or support community and watershed forestry.

Organizations eligible for the grants include counties, municipalities, municipal agencies, nonprofits, state heritage areas and prequalified land trusts. For-profit organizations may be eligible for some grant categories.

Interested applicants can find more information here http://links.pahousenews.com/q/IT0yyV7xqD0XTihYTq11h5l5gopeDK-GkhvZcOJYnZ0aW1lc0ByY24uY29tw4guROVYhdQc7ctLL1O9_y0hFb4VIA

