

Deven Martin Testimony

To Whom it May Concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. I represent Delmar Township, which surrounds Wellsboro, here in Tioga County. Delmar Township is responsible for 109 miles of roads which is the most in Tioga County. It is also one of the largest totals of miles of roads for a township in the state. We also claim to have more gravel roads in total miles than any other township in the state.

The value of offering feedback on how we can better manage both resources and time regarding maintaining our streams is vital to both townships and municipalities.

I am here to offer an example of the difficult nature it can be for a township to complete a project in a timely manner when trying to navigate the permit process with the department of environmental protection.

In October 2020, we noticed that we had a culvert failing, which was causing a partial road to collapse on Stowell Road. After considering our options, we were in contact with our engineer and had them pursue a permit with DEP, so that we could replace the failing culvert pipe. For reasons unknown to us, the emergency permit was denied. Our engineer was told that we would need to complete a G 11 permit. Jump ahead to the spring of 2021, we still have not received a permit. Stowell Road has been reduced to one lane because of the failing shoulder of the road and we had to changed township engineers.

Larson Design was hired as the new township engineer. On May 5, 2021, they completed another G 11 permit for this project. It was finally approved on August 4, 2021. After 10 months in the permit application process, it took us only 2 days to complete both the replacement of the culvert and fix the road. It certainly seems like something so minor or simple should not be held up in a permit process for so long. The residents are the ones who suffer when we must change travel patterns or reduce travel lanes due to unsafe conditions. It is my opinion, not only does the township answer to the residents, but so should the Department of Environmental Protection answer to the residents of the state of Pennsylvania.

Why does the permit process have to be so complicated? Not only is it complicated, but it is also expensive. Townships must hire an engineer to complete the permit for DEP. Would it not be simpler if the township could sit down with a DEP representative and complete an application in the course of a couple hours? Now, you may be wondering what type of stream we are dealing with and that is why this seems to be so complicated? But this "stream" on Stowell Road is completely dry most summers. It is not a flowing creek or river. Thankfully, Delmar Township has been fiscally responsible and is able to afford help from an engineer for this permit process. What about the smaller townships and municipalities throughout the state that are financially strapped? How can we make it easier for them to complete this process and put more money towards a project, instead of paying engineering fees?

Another burden or problem that we deal within the township is trying to keep both culverts and bridges clean from debris. Given the current requirements, we are only allowed to clean 50 feet up or down the stream from our right of way. Trees and/or debris cause such major damage when high-water events take place, that we must do a better job of cleaning the streams, so we can save our structures when flooding takes place.

There needs to be options for both townships and landowners to clean the streams of debris. For example, if we can see an obvious problem (like a tree down) outside of the 50 feet, why can we not address that and prevent a future problem?

I think this would save countless hours, dollars, and headaches down the road. I know I am not the only person who has thought about this, so we need to stop thinking and come up with a simple plan to accomplish this goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to bring light to the problems that a rural Township faces far too often.

Deven Martin