



Swallow Falls Bridge Replacement

Scenic and Wild River Exception Application
Public Hearing
July 10, 2023

Thank you for Participating



- Thank you for your interest in this project
- We value your support of DNR's mission to conserve natural resources for a variety of purposes including ecological, recreational, cultural and aesthetic
- Public engagement is an important part of land management and that is why we are here

Purpose of the Hearing



- Present information on the Swallow Falls Bridge Replacement Project
- Describe impacts to the Youghiogheny Scenic and Wild River Corridor
- Comply with the requirements of the statute and regulations
- Provide an opportunity for public comment on the project

Roles and Responsibilities



- Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – **Reviewing Entity**
 - Hold public hearing
 - DNR makes decision on exception application
 - Staff from MD Park Service handling Scenic and Wild River application and addressing impacts to natural resources
- Garrett County Government - **Applicant**
 - Project lead in cooperation with State Highway Administration
 - Manage and maintain roadway and bridge
 - Oversee project design, apply for permits and approvals
- GPI – **Applicant's Consultant**
 - Engineering consultant hired by Garrett County
 - Developed and submitted Scenic and Wild River application

Project Overview



- Existing bridge is a “temporary” single-lane, Acrow panel truss structure
- It was placed over original two span (support in middle of the river) bridge in 2011 when that bridge was closed due to structural deterioration
- Original bridge is 20’ wide by 101’ long
- New bridge will be 35’ feet wide by 120’ long
- Includes bicycle compatible shoulders and a sidewalk as required by FHWA
- Average daily traffic is 400 – 465 vehicles per day

Purpose of Scenic and Wild Rivers Regulations



- Designated rivers possess outstanding scenic, ecologic, recreational and cultural values
- State policy is to preserve and protect these areas
- River and riparian areas are generally undeveloped and in a natural state
- Regulations in COMAR 08.15.01 – 04 regulate activity in the river corridor

Regulations



- Damming, dredging, filling, channelization, or other alteration of the river or its banks is prohibited except that involving the repair of existing bridges
- Project involves construction of a new bridge
- COMAR 08.15.03.03 allows for “exceptions”

Exception Requirements



- Consistent with legislative intent
- Not injurious to scenic and wild character
- Special circumstances exist that strict application of regulations would cause unnecessary hardship
- Public hearing is required
- DNR shall make a decision on exception request within 60 days

DNR Review

Environmental Assessment



- Aquatic resources
- Riverine resources
- Ecological systems
- Fish and wildlife
- Forest and vegetation
- Geological features
- Hydrological features
- Water quality
- Land use
- Historic and cultural resources
- Private landowner concerns
- Wild character
- Scenic and aesthetic character
- Visitor experience

Bridge Design Affects Natural Resources Impacted



- Bridge design and construction methods affect the disturbed area and resource impacts
- Consultants will present the various options that are being evaluated