

Commmisioner Pete Grannis
NYS DEC
625 Broadway
Albany, New York 12233-1010

November 17, 2008

Re: Connetquot River State Park Preserve—Hatchery

Dear Commissioner Grannis,

On behalf of the entire Board of Directors of the Friends of Connetquot, I wish to voice my concern about your decision to revoke the license for operation of the trout hatchery at Connetquot State Park Preserve.

In my opinion this was a hasty decision, based on inadequate testing on fish taken from the hatchery waters. I do agree that there appears to be the presence of IPN in some of the trout. However, it seems that the logical course to follow would be to do further testing to identify and isolate the sources of the disease, including possibly gulls and eels rather than suspend all operations for an unknown period of time.

As you know, this hatchery has been in operation for over 144 years. It is ironic that you propose to close this hatchery whose trout suffers few if any diseases and in fact was the disease free source of brook trout for all State hatcheries on at least one occasion in the past.

The source of the disease may likely be local birds or animals or possibly stress from pollutants which may have leaked into the river from Veterans Memorial Highway, which crosses the headwaters on the north end. We, the Board, have been trying to communicate this potential problem to the DOT and DEC for more than a year, to no avail. Again, the DEC seems to have a mind-your-own- business attitude toward the public's inquiry on resolving a problem.

The Friends of Connetquot has been in existence for twelve years. We have a membership of approximately 600. Our main concern is the protection and restoration of the buildings and property within the park. We have raised over half a million dollars, all of which has been or is destined to be used to meet our goals. Some of our major projects include installation of a fire suppression system in the main clubhouse, at a cost exceeding \$300,000, and restoration of the 18th century grist mill, which is now in progress. We also have a stream protection account in place, for use to prevent damage to the river and fish, due to a chemical or fuel spill. As you can see, we are very concerned about the preservation and continued operation of this Park for years to come. Closing of the hatchery will have a negative impact on Park revenues and in turn our donations, since a large percentage of Park users and our members are trout fishermen and families who visit the hatchery.

I ask that you reconsider your decision to revoke the license or at the very least postpone the revocation for a year. An additional year would allow for further research to better understand the causes of the infection and the impact that closure would have upon the Park and its patrons.

Yours truly,

Robert J. Labuski, President
Friends of Connetquot