



Long eared owl



The Elm Allee – Washington Rd entrance to Princeton University

Together citizen's work to protect their neighborhoods, historic features, and the critical habitat of the long-eared owl!

## **Together, We Can and Do Make a Difference!**

*From, Noelle Mackay, Stony Brook*

As an individual working to ensure that environmental concerns are integrated into local and state policy, I am often frustrated. In my darkest hours I see more wetlands lost, more sprawling developments and declining water quality. I am a naturally optimistic person, but wonder why am I in this uphill battle. *Then moments occur like January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2004, when the NJDOT selected Alternative D.2A as its preferred alignment for the Millstone Bypass. I realized that Margaret Mead was so right - committed citizens can change the world-or at least their small corner.*

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."  
Margaret Meade*

Early in 1999, the Watershed Association became involved in this bypass issue, when members of a newly formed group, Sensible Transportation Options Partnership (STOP), and one of our volunteer monitors requested our assistance at a NLN meeting. The road was to run parallel to the Millstone River on the Sarnoff property and along the D&R Canal. Local citizens were concerned that this road would destroy wetlands, forests, critical habitat, historic buildings, scenic vistas, and over 15 of the beautiful elms that line Washington Road.

During the next five years people from such diverse groups as the Washington Road Elms Preservation Trust, STOP, the Sierra Club's Central Jersey Group, D&R Canal Watch, and the Whole Earth Center banded together and accomplished amazing things including:

- ◆ Obtaining federal and state historic preservation for features such as the Washington Road Elm Alee, and helping preserve a sense of history and tradition.
- ◆ Organizing hikes and canoe trips along the Canal and Millstone River to showcase the natural beauty, inventory species and habitats, and highlight the need for protection.
- ◆ Going door-to-door educating people, and as a result, thousands of letters were sent to the Governor requesting a thorough review.
- ◆ Mobilizing citizens to send thousands of e-mails in support of Alignment D.2.
- ◆ Evaluating mountains of documents, outlining our concerns, and producing thoughtful analysis of the various alternative alignments.

What kept me motivated during the 200 hours in community meetings were three things - my personal pledge to ensure that the environment had a voice; the conviction and energy of the citizens in the coalition; and those who kept telling me this was a lost cause.

*I am amazed at our achievements!*

*My personal thanks to all those who worked so tirelessly - you have taught me much about hard work, dedication, and commitment. Most of all, you gave me hope for a better tomorrow - my hat is off to you all!*

*"On behalf of the turtles and trees and grass and Millstone waterway (The Silent Majority), thank you for your perseverance.*

*Future generations will herald your efforts in which... less is more."*  
Peter R. Weale, W Windsor resident

## **You Spoke For the River and Your Voices Were Heard!**

The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) selected **Alternative D.2A** as its preferred roadway alignment for the Penns Neck Area. This alignment is slightly modified from the D.2 Alternative endorsed by 30 local citizen organizations in July 2003, including the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association.

*The NJDOT decision vindicates the extensive efforts of a multitude of concerned citizens that worked tirelessly on this project to ensure that local environmental and cultural features are protected, preserved and enhanced.*

In 1999, local residents requested assistance from Stony Brook on this project. Together we petitioned the Governor to ensure that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that evaluated a full range of alternatives for this highway project was conducted

We were successful in this effort! A Roundtable of Partners brought together interested parties from several communities, and over the last two years, bi-monthly meetings were held to evaluate 20 alignments, and Alternative D.2A was chosen.

The D.2A Alternative does *not* include an east-side connector road (ESC), because of the magnitude of potential impacts to cultural and ecological resources. An ESC road was also opposed by 30 local organizations, the NJ State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and the NJDEP.

*The NJDOT selection of the D.2A Alternative is a tremendous victory for the citizens, communities and the environment!*

### ***What does Alternative D.2 include?***

- Route 1 would be constructed in a cut below Washington Road and an overpass constructed near Harrison Street, replacing three traffic lights and allowing uninterrupted north-south traffic flow.
- Frontage roads will run parallel along Route 1 for local traffic.
- A new west side road will facilitate traffic from the Harrison Street area to Route 1, and reduce impacts to the D&R Canal, the Elm Alee and neighborhoods.
- The Vaughn Drive connector road will ease traffic from Alexander Road to the train station and Rte 571, reducing traffic on Rte 1 and Washington Rd.
- Innovative Single Point Interchanges will reduce delays at traffic lights on the overpasses.

We wish to thank all the citizens that participated in this EIS process, Governor McGreevey, NJDOT, Rutgers Voorhees Transportation and Policy Institute, and the consultants.

*This was a very comprehensive and successful community-based effort that should be repeated for other major projects.*

NJDOT suggested a 2-year timeframe, to construct this \$68 million project. But the 2006 start date is dependent upon the limited state and federal funding. Send letters requesting priority funding for this project to DOT.

***For more details and project maps visit :  
[www.thewatershed.org/WSM/nln/millstonebypass.html](http://www.thewatershed.org/WSM/nln/millstonebypass.html) and  
[www.pennsneckeis.org](http://www.pennsneckeis.org)***