

RESOLUTION
04-2025-1

**RESOLUTION OF MIDDLE SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP, MONROE COUNTY,
PENNSYLVANIA, REQUESTING SUPPORT FOR INCLUSION OF
DELAWARE WATER GAP RECREATION AREA LOCAL COMMUNITIES AS A
GATEWAY COMMUNITY PILOT PROGRAM UNDER THE EXPLORE ACT**

WHEREAS, the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, the Middle Delaware National Wild and Scenic River, the September 11th National Memorial Trail, Worthington State Forest, and the Columbia Wildlife Management Area are all located within the I-80/PA SR 611 Delaware Water Gap Regional Transportation Corridor—defined as the area between the Portland-Columbia Toll Bridge (611/I-80 Exit 4) and the intersection of 611/191, extending to the I-80 Smithfield/East Stroudsburg border; and

WHEREAS, the township of Middle Smithfield includes, over eight (8) miles of waterfront along the Middle Delaware National Wild and Scenic River, over eight miles (8) of the thirty one (31) mile McDade Trail used by hikers, bicyclists and cross country skiers, approximate 4250 acres including prime farmland leased by NPS, and approximately 18 miles of roadway all located in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and enjoyed by outdoor enthusiasts such as hikers, hunters, fishermen, etc; and

WHEREAS, Middle Smithfield Township has long served as one of the Gateway Communities to the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, offering services, hospitality, and tourism infrastructure that support park visitors and enhance their experience; and

WHEREAS, H.R. 6492 (118th) EXPLORE Act, (Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences Act) signed into law on January 4, 2025, seeks in part to foster and encourage responsible recreation on Federal and State recreational lands and waters, with an emphasis on enhancements to recreation areas, long-distance bike and hike trails and high volume non-federal public lands, and by mitigating negative visitor impacts on infrastructure and local communities by “providing financial or technical assistance to a gateway community under an existing program” and to “enter into a public-private partnership, cooperative agreement, memorandum of understanding, or similar agreement with a gateway community or a business in a gateway community”; and

WHEREAS, Section 132: Gateway Communities of the EXPLORE Act establishes a Gateway Community Pilot Program that may lead to the study of needs and economic impact of visitor use on local communities that serve as access points to federally managed public lands; and

WHEREAS, overcrowding at the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Smithfield Beach along the Middle Delaware National Wild and Scenic River located less than a half mile from Middle Smithfield Township and, interferes with access to the Smithfield Beach Boat Launch, the McDade Trail, interferes with emergency services along the Freeman Tract Road and, local canoe/kayak/raft/tubing and other businesses, traffic flow on River Road, and access to nearby trailheads; and

WHEREAS, overcrowding at the New Jersey Worthington State Forest Dunnfield Creek and Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and the Middle Delaware National Wild and Scenic River Kittatinny Point Parking Lots, which serves the popular Kittatinny Point Overlook and Boat Launch, Mount Tammany Red Dot Trailhead and the White Blaze Appalachian National Scenic Trail, necessitates the deployment of New Jersey State Police resources to assist with the removal of vehicles illegally parked along I-80, including its exit and entrance ramps which are roadway segments of the Appalachian Trail,

thereby exacerbating existing safety concerns in the area; and

WHEREAS, overcrowding at the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Lake Lenape Parking Lot in Delaware Water Gap Borough, serving the White Blaze Appalachian Trail on Mount Minsi, results in parking along Mountain Road, Route 611, and the Appalachian Trail roadway segment, impacting residents, businesses, hikers, and travelers, necessitating attention by Borough and State Police, and exacerbating existing safety issues in the residential Delaware Water Gap Borough, an Appalachian Trail Community; and

WHEREAS, Point of Gap Overlook, a popular destination for views of Mount Tammany, hiking, scuba diving, and fishing, as well as an unofficial and non-published access point for canoeing, tubing, and rafting on the Delaware River, lacks a designated pedestrian crossing between the parking lot and the river, forcing visitors to make a hazardous crossing of Route 611. Additionally, the absence of restrooms and trash receptacles results in local volunteers regularly collecting litter from the riverbanks, parking lots, and trails, further exacerbating safety and environmental concerns in the area; and

WHEREAS, local communities, such as Middle Smithfield Township, in the Delaware Water Gap Area are uniquely positioned to benefit from being selected as one of the ten communities included in the Gateway Community Pilot Program due to:

- The abundance of current visitor use impacts noted.
- Complex Multijurisdictional Emergency Response Challenges – Emergency services in the area are provided by both volunteer and professional responders, including the National Park Service, across multiple counties in two states—Warren County, New Jersey; Monroe County, Pennsylvania; and Northampton County, Pennsylvania—leading to coordination difficulties, and resource constraints.
- Strained Fire and Rescue Resources –
 1. Emergency responses to travelers, hikers, climbers, and water rescues divert already scarce volunteer fire and rescue resources from the local communities they were originally established to serve, predating the creation of the recreation area and the interstate highway.
 2. The I-80 and PA SR 611 corridor, with over 55,000 vehicle trips per day, experience frequent lane closures due to construction, multi-vehicle accidents, and tractor-trailer incidents requiring specialized extrication and hazardous materials response. Additional factors such as rollovers, congestion, and the lack of shoulders on sharp turns create gridlock in both residential pedestrian villages and tourist areas, further straining emergency response capabilities, delaying access to the nearest emergency room and additional safety issues.
- Increased Wildfire Risk – Rising visitor numbers, increased frequency of lightning strikes, and the presence of drought-stricken, pest-damaged, and dead trees contribute to a heightened wildfire threat, requiring enhanced and complicated mitigation efforts across connected federal and state-owned resources.

WHEREAS, participation in the Gateway Community Pilot Program may lead to the opportunity to:

- Quantify the direct and indirect impacts of wildfires, emergency service demands, infrastructure deficiencies, and highway incidents on local communities, by establishing a baseline, identifying trends and projections.
- Assess the need for enhanced wildfire detection, prevention, and suppression strategies.
- Identify opportunities for increased federal and state funding to support mitigation.
- Strengthen regional collaboration on wildfire preparedness, evacuation planning, and mutual aid agreements.
- Develop a public education framework to promote responsible recreation and fire safety awareness among visitors.

WHEREAS, the Middle Smithfield Township Board of Supervisors affirms that this request, and any

future support or improvements resulting from participation in the Gateway Community Pilot Program, shall not use eminent domain or condemnation for land acquisition nor shall it impose new restrictions or access to existing rock-climbing locations and routes.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Middle Smithfield Township Board of Supervisors requests our federal legislators work with Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum at the Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20240; urging the inclusion of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area Gateway Communities in the EXPLORE Act Pilot Program and to use other creative actions to help secure inclusion; and

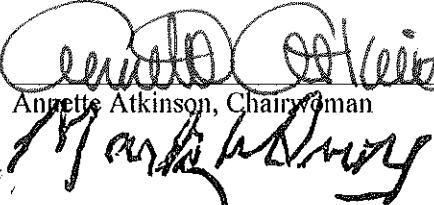
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Middle Smithfield Township Board of Supervisors requests support letters and resolutions from all affected municipalities, neighboring counties, and state representatives be directed to our federal representatives, urging them to advocate for the inclusion of the Delaware Water Gap Recreation Area local communities in the Gateway Community Pilot Program under the EXPLORE Act.

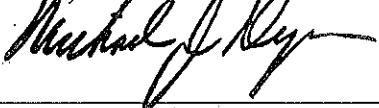
Adopted this 10th day of April 2025.

(Township Seal)

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
MIDDLE SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP


Annette Atkinson, Chairwoman


Mark Oley, Vice-Chairman


Michael J. Dwyer

Michael J. Dwyer, Supervisor

CERTIFICATION

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of Resolution 04-2025-1 enacted by the Board of Supervisors this 10th day of April, 2025.


Michele L. Clewell, Township Secretary