

To: The Martha's Vineyard Commission  
Re-Squibnocket Bridge proposal

From: David Damroth  
PO Box 295 27 Oyster Lane  
Chilmark, MA 02535

Dear Commissioners,

I want to add my voice to those members of the Chilmark community who have raised concerns about the proposed bridge at Squibnocket Beach. First I would like you to understand why I am so interested in this project.

I was a Chilmark selectman for two terms which ended in 1987. Those years were difficult, yet rewarding, allowing me a degree of insight in how a small town functions. In 2010 I received an associate's degree from The Harvard Extension's School of Environmental Management. Working for that degree took me ten years of extensive and deep study in the current field of environmental science which included much about the implications of climate change. I was able to include my experience as an islander in that work because, as you know, our community is on the forefront of the impacts that will result from our changing environment.

The original proposal from the Squibnocket Farms group was warmly received by the Chilmark selectmen. Shortly thereafter a public forum was held to introduce the project to the town members. It was at that meeting where I realized the proposal did not take into consideration any thought about the future climate trends and their implications to both the project and the Squibnocket Beach area. So began my opposition to the original project so in need of a deep review.

Town politics are so often divisive. This situation was not any different. Two sides formed and the debate raged. Eventually the proposal was defeated at town meeting where a committee was formed by the moderator for reconsideration.

The committee did a good job considering new information which included quite a bit of the missing scientific evidence so necessary for the formulation of a

sound solution. My own paper on the environmental impacts can be found at the following address:

[http://www.chilmarkma.gov/Pages/ChilmarkMA\\_squibnocket/Damroth%20072614.pdf](http://www.chilmarkma.gov/Pages/ChilmarkMA_squibnocket/Damroth%20072614.pdf) . This paper is the first academic paper I have written since I received my degree and the findings are relevant to the Vineyard in its entirety.

The committee took about 6 months to issue its findings. During the process I attended all but one hearing. In the final meetings the committee had to take the findings and marry them to a politically acceptable recommendation which it did. I remember so well one committee member Dan Greenberg, who sadly died shortly thereafter, saying this bridge will be low enough to be washed over two to three times per year. The committee agreed. The same question came out at town meeting where for the sake of simplicity it was said the bridge would be no higher than Mr. Poole, the moderator, with his hands in the air. With that, the revised proposal was resoundingly approved. I mention this because the height of the structure was at two crucial times a major point of concern. Somehow that concern, which was so very clearly addressed in committee and town meeting, has been lost. The newest proposal is for a bridge so high it will never be washed over.

I raise this point for a very important reason to you, the commissioners, in your deliberations about this proposal as a DRI. It is very clear that our island community will be seriously impacted by a changing climate with a special emphasis on sea-level rise. Some examples of susceptible areas include;

- 1) The Vineyard Haven area from the Steamship Authority dock including all the land between there and the new hospital in Oak Bluffs
- 2) All town harbor areas and the lands surrounding each
- 3) The beach road between Oak Bluffs and Edgartown
- 4) The entire Katama plains area

and these are just a few examples. Each situation in which your deliberative authority will be called into action will include solutions to the localized problems that need to be addressed. Perhaps more relevant to the regional planning, and therefore falling under the purview of the M. V. Commission, is the potential overall effect of the combined nature of these adaptations on the very character of our island community. It is that character that makes the Vineyard the place of beauty we all love so deeply. It is the preservation of that visual appeal that I believe should be a large part of your mission and consideration. There must be a

regional component that conditions the character of the coming adaptive projects to preserve the nature and character of this island.

I would suggest that your oversight of the Squibnocket project is vital in helping to maintain our small town charm which without the proper thought might easily be lost.

I would like to thank each of you for your work to review this project and hope for success under the new leadership of Mr. Turner.

David Damroth

27 Oyster Lane

Chilmark, MA 02535

508-645-2159

[davemvy@aol.com](mailto:davemvy@aol.com)