

# **\$150 Million Indian River Inlet Bridge Opens**

**January 20, 2012 (Bethany Beach)** – The effort to build a new bridge over the Indian River Inlet has been a long and winding road that finally led to the \$150 million span's low-key opening on Friday.

The new cable-stayed bridge replaces a structure that was becoming an increasing safety concern. The current flowing through the inlet, among the most powerful on the East Coast, had undermined the bridge's supports, creating holes of up to 100 feet in some places.

The limited opening of the bridge is a milestone in a project surrounded by controversy since its inception. The project had to be put out to bid three times and suffered several setbacks, the most notable of which was the failure of an attempt to construct earthen approach ramps. That issue, involving millions of tax dollars, is still being litigated.

But on Friday there was a general sense of celebration at the near completion of the project, leading to more than a few light-hearted comments.

"There aren't many perks to being governor," said Gov. Markell. "But I think being the first to drive over the bridge is a pretty good one."

Among those officials joining Gov. Markell in a small convoy of vehicles that made the ceremonial first crossing was: U.S. Senator Tom Carper, State Reps. Gerald Hocker (R-Ocean View), Dave Wilson (R-Cedar Creek Hundred), Harvey Kenton (R-Milford), Pete Schwartzkopf (D-Rehoboth) and State Sen. George Bunting, Jr. (D-Bethany Beach).

Transportation workers opened one lane of the bridge to southbound traffic immediately following the event. One northbound lane will be opened to the public shortly. Demolition work will then begin on the old bridge.

According to officials with the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), all four lanes and the pedestrian and bikeway will be open sometime this spring.

DelDOT plans a larger ceremony, officially marking the opening of the bridge, later in the year.