

~ American Littoral Society ~ Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions ~
Clean Ocean Action ~ Coalition for Affordable Housing and the Environment ~
Housing and Community Development Network of NJ ~ New Jersey Future ~
New Jersey Audubon ~ New Jersey Conservation Foundation ~
New Jersey Environmental Federation ~ New Jersey Highlands Coalition ~
Pinelands Preservation Alliance ~ Regional Plan Association ~ Stonybrook-Millstone Watershed
Association ~ Tri-State Transportation Campaign ~ Trust for Public Land

December 11, 2009

Governor-elect Chris Christie
PO Box 022
20 West State St.
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Dear Governor-elect Christie,

Congratulations on your election! As you know, the weeks between Election Day and the start of your administration are a crucial time for setting the direction for New Jersey's future. In the next few weeks, you will make key appointments, and begin work on the ambitious policy agenda New Jersey wants and needs, and we look forward to assisting you in this effort in any way we can.

We need to improve the economy, get people back to work and build prosperity that benefits everyone for the long-term. We cannot continue to waste vital public resources - we must protect and build on our assets. Voters across the political spectrum showed that they understand this, with the strong bi-partisan support for the land preservation bond.

All of us, citizens as well as elected and appointed officials, have to look at the big picture, so that we can make key decisions that affect all our lives, based on their real consequences in our communities and throughout the state. Leadership must focus on the relationships among the issues, and help government at the state and local levels make public decisions so that taxpayers receive broad benefits for the taxes we pay.

In the coming year, there are many key decisions facing you and all our state leaders that will impact the land and water that we all share – that provides us clean air, clean water, sustenance, recreation, housing, transportation, jobs, and energy.

Because of the critical timing and importance of these decisions, a diverse coalition of 16 nonprofit groups working on a wide range of issues came together to reach consensus on common ground -- what needs to be done now. The result is a shared agenda to improve New Jersey's physical, economic, and social conditions for the long term. Before the end of 2010, your administration should take specific actions to:

Enact clean energy policies

Provide more transportation options

Support compact development and housing that is affordable

Protect our natural resources

Integrate systems for making state level decisions that affect our future

Enact energy policies to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and combat global warming.

Seeking new ways to increase energy efficiency, reduce consumption and produce more energy from renewable sources will save money, create new jobs and improve the environment. New Jersey has established an Energy Master Plan and a Global Warming Response Act – but it remains an open question whether the citizens of New Jersey will get the actions they specify. We can build on our assets to develop new industry, new jobs and new economic opportunities – if we make energy decisions that protect our water, air, and critical natural areas.

1. Implement the state's Energy Master Plan for energy efficiency, renewable energy generation, green energy jobs, energy independence, energy conservation, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and provide overarching leadership and coordination from the Governor to adopt an implementation plan to meet the state's 2050 greenhouse gas reduction goals by the statutory June 2010 deadline, placing additional emphasis on energy efficiency, land use and transportation.
2. Develop and implement an effective state and regional land use planning framework for development patterns that reduce carbon emissions from heating and cooling and transportation.
3. Reject any new fossil fuel facility in the ocean or coal-fired power plant on land.

Provide more transportation options. Our transportation network is the backbone of our economy and our livelihoods, and our over-reliance on trucks and automobiles is a drag on both of these. The people of New Jersey want better options for moving freight and for getting where they need to be: better funding for expanded transit services and complete streets that serve the needs of everyone -- pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders.

4. Create a new and improved Transportation Trust Fund that will emphasize a stronger connection to more efficient land use patterns, provide higher levels of support for transit and help meet our 2050 Greenhouse Gas emissions targets.

Support compact development in the right places and housing that is affordable. We must increase the prosperity of our older communities with investments that will improve our economy and our lives. Foreclosures continue to plague our families and neighborhoods. And still, tens of thousands of people are struggling to find a place to live that they can afford. We need policies that encourage a housing market accessible to everyone, and recognize that what and where we build affects our land and water, economic disparities among communities, transportation choices and energy use.

5. Enact lender foreclosure fee legislation to provide resources for foreclosure interventions that will keep eligible people in their homes and neighborhoods stable.
6. Ensure that new developments are mixed-income, with a minimum of 20% of the units in new developments affordable to low and moderate income households.

7. Reform the Council on Affordable Housing and appoint State Housing Commission members who can look at the big picture and within six months recommend a plan to overcome impediments to producing affordable housing while respecting environmental constraints.

Protect our natural resources. Our natural resources are the foundation for healthy communities and a robust economy. New Jersey is on track to be the first state to reach full build-out. Each year from 1995 to 2002, over 15,000 acres of forest, farms and wetlands were lost, converted into developed land. Almost half this land had been identified by the State Plan as priority areas for agricultural or natural resource protection.

We can't let this happen. Crucial decisions about where and how to grow cannot be made in isolation from each other – we have to look at the big picture, and make public decisions to protect our natural spaces, our drinking water, our shorelands, and our health.

8. Implement the short-term open space funding measure and establish stable, long-term funding mechanisms for open space and historic preservation including acquisition, capital and operations, and restoration of natural systems.
9. To improve the planning and management of wastewater systems, New Jersey must implement the Water Quality Management Planning regulations adopted in July 2008 and require and support submission of up-to-date Wastewater Management Plans. DEP shall provide counties and municipalities with technical assistance and a fair and open process for evaluating and responding to DEP data used to prepare these plans. The Administration should look for opportunities to strengthen the rules to incorporate comprehensive land use planning.
10. Complete and implement the statewide water supply master plan, and develop a strategic investment plan to repair obsolete water and sewer infrastructure systems giving priority to areas where growth is desired.
11. Create and adopt incentives to reduce pollution from over-use of fertilizer and from storm water run off. Adopt updated and more environmentally friendly construction standards.

Focus the State's Administration on unified goals for New Jersey's future. Too many rules and decisions of State Administrative Departments conflict with or under-cut each other. We can't afford to continue making short-term, narrow decisions about natural resources, transportation, development, housing, and energy which ultimately cancel each other out. We need solutions that improve all of these. State government must take a more comprehensive and coordinated approach, to benefit all the citizens of New Jersey and the next generation.

12. Revive and reform the State Planning Commission and Office of Smart Growth so they can carry out their missions of state level comprehensive planning.
13. Appoint people who have an understanding of and a demonstrated commitment to the statutory mission of the environmental, transportation and planning agencies and commissions of the state, have established qualifications and credibility for

the specific category for representation, and have no conflicts of interest.

In closing, we stand united behind these important goals. To achieve them we offer you our collective and individual knowledge, skills, and vast organizational networks as you transition into your new role and beyond. We look forward to working with you and your administration as you shape and implement New Jersey policies to meet the economic, social, and environmental needs of today and future generations.

Sincerely,



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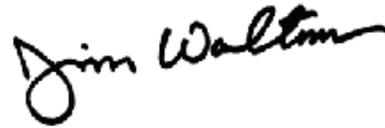
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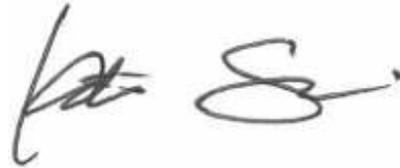
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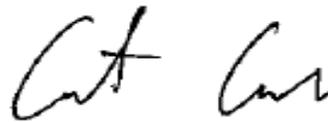
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cc: Senator Marcia A. Karrow
open letter