02

Climate and the Environment

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2017 RECOMMENDATIONS	STATUS
Establish Energy Efficient Portfolio Standard requiring utilities to meet a minimum level of energy efficiency each year and include incentives to achieve high energy efficiency gains.	✓
Set a goal to accelerate wider-scale development of "net-zero" homes and buildings—those where the amount of energy consumed yearly is about the same as the amount of renewable energy created there.	✓
Significantly step up efforts to test for—and lessen exposure to—lead and identify new sources of funding to assist with reducing health risks.	✓
Rejoin the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.	✓
Expand electric car infrastructure by participating in the regional Transportation and Climate Initiative on electric vehicles and support the proposed expansion of CAFÉ standards for cars and light trucks during the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration program review.	✓
Take necessary steps to move ahead with offshore wind projects, including the creation of Offshore Wind Renewable Energy Credits as a financing mechanism necessary for investment in wind projects.	✓
Increase minimum energy efficiency standards for household and commercial appliances, codified in law and regulation, and update state construction code standards for new commercial and residential buildings.	✓
Accelerate expansion of fast charging stations for electric vehicles on the state's roadways, modeled on the U.S. DoT's "alternative fuel corridors" initiative.	✓
Update the state Water Supply Master Plan.	✓
Adopt standards on contaminants in drinking water proposed by the Drinking Water Quality Institute.	✓
Use money from the Clean Energy Fund exclusively for energy efficiency, clean energy projects, and innovative clean energy technologies.	
Ensure that pipelines do not damage critical natural resources by using the state's full authority under the Clean Water Act and state regulations.	

Restore and strengthen Clean Water Act protections.	
Require the Pinelands Commission and the Highlands Council to update their plans to address the impacts of climate change.	
Appoint members to the State Planning Commission, Pinelands Commission, and Highlands Council who are committed to carrying out agencies' missions.	
Impose a moratorium on state regulatory approval or funding for any development that has not been screened to ensure it is not adding to pollution burdens already imposed on economically struggling communities.	
Develop adaptation and emergency plans to address the impacts of climate change, with the involvement of community residents, local community groups, and environmental justice organizations.	
Mandate 80% of electricity sold in the state comes from renewable sources by 2050 and pass the Renewable Energy Transition Act.	
Require the Clean Energy Master Plan to be updated every five years, establishing a pathway to achieve the statewide target for 2050, including analysis and interim emissions targets by sector for 15 years.	
Expand solar to about 15% of New Jersey's energy mix by 2030 and help reach that goal by adopting a program to reduce costs to residences and businesses.	
Direct New Jersey's Board of Public Utilities to undertake a comprehensive review of best practices nationally and make recommendations for further strengthening and expanding New Jersey's solar capacity through a public process.	
Conduct a comprehensive assessment of all state water programs, including analysis of needed repairs and improvements.	
Develop a climate change action plan to address the coastal threats from rising sea levels. The plan should include effective growth-management strategies, sustainable development practices, and protective shoreline-management plans.	
Update the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan, and Highlands Regional Master Plan to address threats New Jersey faces.	
Conduct a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of beach replenishment projects involving climate change considerations. The analysis should include alternatives to replenishment as a way to respond appropriately to the risks associated with climate change.	

Remove the Office of State Planning from the Department of State and establish it as an independent agency located in the Department of Treasury.	✗
Adopt a measurable, accountable energy-saving goal of 30% below 2015 levels for electric and natural gas usage in NJ by 2030.	✗
Establish a state agency or authority to drive energy efficiency measures, monitor and evaluate the success of current and future measures, and develop innovative ways to reduce energy use.	✗
Create a statewide hub for "green jobs" training, modeled on successful programs in Trenton and Newark.	✗
Place a moratorium on all pending pipeline projects and conduct a review to determine if they are necessary, safe, and consistent with the state's goals to reduce the impacts of climate change.	✗
Mandate significantly reduced diesel particulate-matter emissions, beginning with support for reviving a ban on pre-2007 trucks from ports operated by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.	✗

✓ Achieved ▨ Partially Achieved ✗ Not Achieved

Ongoing Climate and Environmental Priorities from 2017

Significantly step up efforts to test for—and lessen exposure to—lead and identify new sources of funding to assist with reducing health risks.

Science shows there is no safe level of exposure to lead, and children are most vulnerable to lead poisoning and the permanent damage it can cause. The 2017 Crossroads NJ report outlined several necessary measures to address the persistent presence of lead in our drinking water and built environment, including:

- annual testing for lead in drinking water at schools, child care centers, and pre-schools;
- requiring municipalities to conduct lead paint inspections in one- and two-family rental units;
- mandating soil testing to determine lead content prior to the sale of homes that have a higher risk of contamination;

- adopting a statewide plan to reduce exposure from lead-contaminated buildings, soil, and drinking water; and
- compiling and granting public access to tests of soil lead levels.

Since that time, New Jersey has made tremendous progress—with statewide efforts to remediate lead service lines, ensure ongoing testing of drinking water in schools, and reduce lead paint exposure in housing. In 2021, the New Jersey Lead Service Line Replacement Law mandated an overhaul of all lead service lines within ten years (in some cases 15 years),[1] and cities like Newark emerged as state and national models for implementation of the law. New Jersey also implemented the Lead Safe Certification Law, requiring inspection of rental units every three years or upon tenant turnover. Despite this, preventing lead exposure in housing remains a significant challenge for the state as a whole.

Develop adaptation and emergency plans to address the impacts of climate change, with the involvement of community residents, local community groups, and environmental justice organizations.

Though the consequences of climate change are more threatening and immediate in economically distressed neighborhoods and communities of color, many of those communities' plans are inadequate. Accomplishments made in recent years, including the passage of climate change hazard mitigation legislation and implementation of the Resilient NJ program at NJDEP, have strengthened adaptation and preparation plans across the state. However, future planning efforts should thoroughly and authentically engage marginalized communities, environmental justice organizations, and residents across the state—those who are particularly at risk of harm—in the development and monitoring of adaptation and emergency plans. Plans should include steps for evacuation; deployment of police, fire, and public works services; and providing food and shelter during a climate-related crisis.

Create a statewide hub for "green jobs" training, modeled on successful programs in Trenton and Newark.

Examples of green jobs include stormwater management, cleaning up "brownfields" for reuse, urban forestry, and assessing buildings to see whether they meet energy efficiency standards. This effort could leverage federal and state job-training funds and involve renewing the state tax credit for employers that hire graduates of the program.

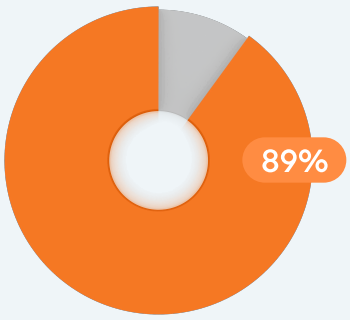
Conduct a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of all beach replenishment projects involving climate change considerations. The analysis should include alternatives to replenishment as a way to respond appropriately to the risks associated with climate change.

Between 1936 and 2023, over $3 billion in local, state, and federal tax dollars were spent pouring more than 245 million cubic yards of sand to replenish New Jersey beaches and reconstruct dunes.[2] It is a losing proposition to keep spending taxpayer dollars to replace sand that washes away in extreme weather. Even the best efforts of coastal municipalities to

adapt their master plans, zoning ordinances, and building codes to changing climate conditions are no substitute for a larger scope of regional planning and management strategies. With the loss of $140 million in federal beach replenishment funding in 2025,[3] New Jersey needs to seek other alternatives to maintain the coastline.

Mandate significantly reduced diesel particulate-matter emissions, beginning with support for reviving a ban on pre-2007 trucks from ports operated by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

New Jersey's urban areas have many old factory sites filled with toxic chemicals. Cleaning up these sites often takes years or even decades because of lawsuits, the difficulty in finding who is responsible, and a lack of money or urgency. In fact, some polluted sites are simply paved over. One investigation found that 89% of New Jersey residents with incomes below the federal poverty line live within a mile of a contaminated site for which no cleanup plan exists.[4] In addition to toxic exposure through soil and infrastructure, people living in cities also breathe more vehicle exhaust than those in suburban and rural areas.



One investigation found that 89% of New Jersey residents with incomes below the federal poverty line live within a mile of a contaminated site for which no cleanup plan exists.[4]

The state should require major reductions in harmful diesel smoke from trucks. This effort should start by reviving a ban on pre-2007 trucks from ports operated by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Improving air quality will have a salutary effect on the health of residents in Newark, Elizabeth, and the surrounding areas.

Endnotes

1 "Lead Service Line Replacement Guidance." Water Infrastructure Investment Plan, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, https://dep.nj.gov/wiip/lead-service-line-replacement-srf-requirements/.

2 Rodas, Steven. "Money Spent Replenishing Jersey Shore's Disappearing Beaches to Hit a Record $3B." NJ.com, https://www.nj.com/news/2023/11/money-spent-replenishing-jersey-shores-disappearing-beaches-to-hit-a-record-3b.html.

3 Flanagan, Brenda. "Federal Cutbacks Hit NJ Beach Renewal Projects." NJ Spotlight News, https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/federal-cutbacks-hit-nj-beach-renewal-projects/.

4 Gonzalez, Sarah, Jenny Ye, and The WNYC Data News Team. "Dirty Little Secrets: New Jersey's Poorest Live Surrounded by Contamination." WNYC, https://www.wnyc.org/story/nj-contaminated-sites/.