

SUMMING UP:

Climate Change Adds Urgency to Restoring Environmental Protection

Facing serious impending dangers from climate change, New Jersey needs, more than ever, to restore protecting its environment to the prominent role necessary for a healthy, secure future.

New Jersey is vulnerable to the hotter, wetter weather and rising seas produced by climate change. Our geography and dense development—more than half the state's people live in a coastal county—contribute to substantial threats to residents' well-being. And, in many instances, the situation is worsened because of action deferred and protections weakened. Restoring New Jersey to national environmental leadership is about far more than bragging rights. The state's quality of life is on the line.

Our economic and physical health depend on devoting attention, leadership, and financial resources to execute common-sense policies in four key areas that address the scientific realities of climate change.

- Energy Policy
- Water Supply and Quality
- State and Regional Planning
- Environmental Justice

Each of these areas is important on its own. Together, they must be part of a sustained, well-coordinated effort to prevent climate change from being disastrous for New Jersey.

Key Recommendations

New Jersey needs to advance the use of renewable energy, substantially reduce carbon emissions, and use energy more efficiently.

- Rejoin the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a multi-state collaborative proven to reduce carbon dioxide levels and promote energy efficiency while at the same time generating revenue to fund clean energy programs.
- Require a 25% reduction in emissions for power plants located in economically disadvantaged communities.
- Mandate that 80% of all electricity sold in the state comes from renewable sources by 2050.

- Increase efficiency standards for energy use, utilities, appliances, and construction.
- Create a statewide hub for “green jobs” training, modeled on successful programs in Trenton and Newark.
- Take the necessary steps to move ahead with offshore wind projects, including creation of Offshore Wind Renewable Energy Credits as the financing mechanism necessary for investment in wind projects.
- Place a moratorium on all pending pipeline projects and conduct a review to determine whether they are necessary, safe, and consistent with the state’s goals to reduce the adverse impacts of climate change.

The state needs to maintain safe and abundant water resources, recognizing that the health and well-being of New Jerseyans depend on water supply and quality.

- Restore and strengthen Clean Water Act protections after years of rollbacks.
- Update the state Water Supply Master Plan.
- Adopt strict standards limiting contaminants in drinking water.
- Require the Pinelands Commission and Highlands Council to update their plans to address the impacts of climate change.

New Jersey needs to preserve and protect its shoreline and open space, to prevent harm to residents and natural resources threatened by climate change.

- Develop a climate-change action plan to address threats from rising sea level to large swaths of the coast, with 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.
- Strengthen state and regional planning agencies.

A well-designed response to climate change would improve conditions for many people in New Jersey who suffer disproportionately from health problems because of pollution where they live.

- Impose a moratorium on state regulatory approval or funding for any development that has not been screened to ensure it does not add to pollution burdens already imposed on economically struggling communities or communities of color.
- Increase significantly efforts to test for—and lessen exposure to—lead, and identify new sources of funds to assist with reducing health risks.
- Improve air quality by significantly reducing pollution.
- Develop adaptation and emergency plans to address the impacts of climate change, with the involvement of community residents, local groups, and environmental justice organizations.

Climate Change Adds Urgency to Environmental Protection is one of seven reports in the *Crossroads NJ* series produced by The Fund for New Jersey to inform debate in this pivotal election year. The full text of the reports and other information about *Crossroads NJ* are available at www.fundfornj.org/crossroadsnj. If you have questions about *Crossroads NJ*, email crossroadsnj@taftcommunications.com.