A new push to heal Barnegat Bay, the Shore

The cleanest it’s been in decades?

Early this fall, as Gov. Chris Christie urged swimmers to return to our beaches following Hurricane Irene, he told us the Shore was “the cleanest it’s been in decades.” Unfortunately, our experiences last summer tell a different story.

In recent years, New Jerseyans have seen hundreds of beach closings, throngs of stinging jellyfish in Barnegat Bay, and a 100-mile-long algae bloom floating along the shoreline.

Each is a symptom of the pollution associated with overdevelopment at the Jersey Shore. And—as Megan Fitzpatrick, clean water associate for Environment New Jersey, pointed out in a recent Star-Ledger op-ed—until we win tough new limits on pollution, the Shore’s problems are likely to persist.

We need a new plan for the Shore

Last year, the governor released a 10-point plan to restore the Shore and Barnegat Bay. Unfortunately, the plan fails to address the pollution flowing from ocean-side structures—and makes no mention of badly-needed pollution limits.

“The problems at the Shore and Barnegat Bay are too important not to address,” said Fitzpatrick. “A year after Gov. Christie’s plan to clean the Shore, we’re still waiting on him to address runoff pollution from development.”

A step forward for Shore protection—and a new challenge

This fall, with member support, Environment New Jersey made encouraging inroads in its campaign to clean the Shore, winning a new law to limit pollution from fertilizer. The new rules, which went into effect Nov. 15, reduce the polluting chemicals in each bag of fertilizer and issue common-sense guidelines that limit water contamination.

In the weeks and months ahead, Environment New Jersey staff will be working to build on this success and win strong, sensible rules to clean the Shore and limit pollution from overdevelopment.

“We want New Jerseyans to know about threats faced by the Shore, and join us in urging Gov. Christie to take strong, comprehensive steps to guarantee its health for future generations,” said Fitzgerald.

Barnegat Bay has been labeled one of the world’s most polluted lagoons.

Visit our website, and urge Gov. Chris Christie to crack down on the Shore’s worst polluters.

www.EnvironmentNewJersey.org
Back in 2004, the founders of Environment New Jersey pushed the state to drag auto makers out of the dark ages and into the future by requiring them to produce cleaner, more efficient cars. Soon, 13 states had followed our lead.

Now, in 2012, we continue to see the payoff, as more hybrid cars appear on our roads, and as New Jersey’s first electric car finally arrived.

All this progress set the stage for President Obama’s historic November proposal to require cars to meet a fleet-wide average of 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025. This is the biggest step the U.S. has ever taken to get off oil and tackle global warming.

We still have a ways to go for completely clean cars. But in the meantime, thank you for getting us this far.

Sincerely,

Dena Mottola Jaborska
Executive Director

To our members

Recent action

Delaware River: reprieve from fracking

Late this November, the Delaware River Basin won a reprieve from the threat of “fracking,” when an interstate committee postponed a vote that could have opened nearby land to this hazardous new method of gas drilling.

Prior to this decision, more than 800 citizens gathered in Trenton for an Environment New Jersey-supported rally urging the committee—on which Gov. Chris Christie sits—to protect the river, not open it to hundreds of gas wells that could scar priceless scenery, poison the water supply for millions, and pollute the air.

Environment New Jersey Field Director Doug O’Malley led protesters on a march to the State House, urging Gov. Christie to protect the Delaware.

Nine environmental champions win re-election

This fall, as nine consistent environmental champions faced tough re-election challenges, Environment New Jersey issued endorsements and fanned out from Atlantic City to Glen Rock, reaching out to critical constituencies and countering a barrage of negative advertising, often funded by out-of-state oil and gas companies.

In the two weeks prior to Election Day, Environment New Jersey staff and supporters organized phone banks in South Orange, Fair Lawn and Trenton to urge members to vote for environmental allies come election day.

All nine candidates we endorsed won re-election, ensuring that their work to protect the environment will continue. The lawmakers were: Sen. Jim Whelan (Dist. 2), Sen. Linda Greenstein (Dist. 14), Assemblyman Dan Benson (Dist. 14), Senator Barbara Buono (Dist. 18), Assemblyman Peter Barnes (Dist. 18), Assemblyman John McKeon (Dist. 27), Assemblywoman Mila Jasey (Dist. 27), Sen. Bob Gordon (Dist. 38) and Assemblywoman Connie Wagner (Dist. 38).
Efforts to stop the clean air rollback

Gov. Christie moves to kill clean air program

Last spring, with no discussion and no opportunity for debate, Gov. Chris Christie made headlines when he decided to kill New Jersey’s strongest anti-pollution law: the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

Over the summer, Environment New Jersey sent more than 10,000 emails, phone calls and letters from New Jerseyans urging the governor to reconsider.

When he refused to budge, we switched our focus instead to urging our legislators to block Gov. Christie and keep New Jersey in this critical clean air program.

The program caps power plant emissions of carbon dioxide, makes polluters pay for fouling our air, and invests those payments in clean energy solutions, including solar and energy-saving buildings.

Meet-ups for clean air across the state

Since November, we’ve been holding local meet-ups in libraries and coffee shops in Princeton, Ridgewood and other locations across the state, to educate our members about the issue, brainstorm new strategies, and teach them how to engage with local legislators.

Further, together with other organizations and concerned citizens, Environment New Jersey held rallies in key towns across the state, highlighting the environmental and economic benefits of RGGI, and calling on legislators to stand up to the governor and protect the program.

A call for leadership from Trenton

In the coming months, Environment New Jersey will send organizers into the key legislative districts that will decide this issue—so we can reach thousands more New Jerseyans, confront the lawmakers who represent them, and build more support among the local media, businesses and other leaders who shape opinions in each district.

Finally, we’ll call on each of our leaders in Trenton directly, urging them to keep New Jersey in RGGI.

Right now, as Gov. Christie works to kill RGGI, the other nine states in the program, from Maine to Maryland, are discussing ways to strengthen it.

Their action will help combat global warming, clear the region’s air, and deliver more clean energy across the Northeast. And it’s time for New Jersey to join them.

“RGGI has delivered significant benefits to New Jersey’s environment and economy,” said Matt Elliott, clean air advocate for Environment New Jersey.

“More than ever, we need pollution laws like this on our books. Gov. Christie should be cooperating with our neighboring states to make the program even stronger.”

Interview:

Sen. Bob Menendez

What’s the biggest fight right now to protect the environment in Washington?

Unfortunately the biggest fight seems to be protecting the Clean Air Act. The EPA has been able to come out from under the thumb of the previous administration and finally address pollution from old, dirty Midwest coal power plants. In response, polluters and the Republican Party have tried to gut the Clean Air Act at every turn.

So far we have succeeded in fighting off these efforts and if we continue to be successful it will have tremendous health benefits for the people of New Jersey. It will mean thousands of hospital trips avoided, thousands fewer asthma attacks, and thousands fewer premature deaths in our state alone. And the economic benefits nationally from fewer sick days and lower health care costs are measured in the hundreds of billions of dollars.

What are your top environmental priorities in Washington?

Right now my priorities are protecting New Jersey from coastal oil drilling, preserving the Clean Air Act, ending oil subsidies, preserving open space, weaning ourselves off oil, and fighting climate change. There is certainly a lot of work to do!

For more from our interview with Bob Menendez, visit our website.
A victory for our northern forests

New Jersey’s northern mountains and forests, known as the Highlands, remain safe from more development, at least for now. We helped block Gov. Chris Christie from appointing a pro-development majority to the Highlands Council, the committee charged with protecting and preserving this special part of New Jersey. Unfortunately, in 2012, three appointees’ terms expire, giving the governor a new opportunity to replace them with pro-development candidates.

Environment New Jersey, together with the Highlands Coalition and other partners, mobilized grassroots opposition to the nominees and packed legislative hearing rooms with concerned citizens opposing development in the Highlands, which shelter the drinking water for more than 3 million New Jerseyans. In the end, the governor was able to seat only two of his pro-development Council appointments.

Still, other threats to the region remain, including a new move to build major power lines. Environment New Jersey will join coalition partners in taking legal action to halt the project.