President’s plan will clean up power plants

This summer, President Barack Obama announced a climate plan that will set limits on global warming pollution from new and existing power plants, advance energy efficiency and increase the nation’s commitment to renewable energy.

In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, a dizzying stretch of extreme weather events and continued temperature records, the president’s plan to address global warming was loudly applauded by Environment New Jersey and others.

The president directed the Environmental Protection Agency to set limits on carbon pollution from new and existing power plants, which lack any federal limits despite being the largest single source of this global warming pollutant.

“President Obama responded to millions of Americans who spoke out on behalf of their communities and families, urging him to lead on global warming,” said Doug O’Malley, director of Environment New Jersey. “All of us who have felt the effects of global warming, or worried about what’s in store for our kids, should know that this is the plan from President Obama we’ve been waiting for.”

Linked: Extreme weather, climate change
Environment New Jersey worked to educate the public on the need to reduce global warming pollution from power plants, and delivered thousands of comments from the public calling for action.

To bolster our case, Environment New Jersey released a new report demonstrating the link between climate change and extreme weather events like Sandy.

At an April event in Long Branch, Environment New Jersey was joined by Rep. Frank Pallone to release “In the Path of the Storm,” which examines county-level weather-related disaster data from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for 2007 through 2012.

Since 2007, federally declared weather-related disasters affected all 21 New Jersey counties. Recent weather-related disasters in Long Branch, N.J. and up and down the Jersey Shore included Winter Storm Nemo, Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Irene.

To learn more about our work to restore the Shore and reduce pollution, and how you can take action, visit: www.EnvironmentNewJersey.org

President Obama speaks to a group of students about the need for alternative energy sources.
This summer was the “Summer after Sandy” down at the Shore. While it felt good to prove that we were stronger than the storm by traveling to the Shore, it was hard to escape Sandy’s impacts. And it’s going to take longer than a summer to get communities rebuilt.

This is an enormous undertaking—and we need to rebuild in ways that will protect the Shore from flooding and reduce pollution on our beaches and bays for generations to come. Most importantly, we need to tackle global warming, which has led to an increase in extreme weather events like Sandy.

New Jerseyans have come together for the Shore before. When needles and garbage washed up on our Shore, we demanded and won new laws against coastal pollution. When Washington delayed sending relief after Sandy, we spoke out and Congress responded. Even as the summer fades, we need to redouble our efforts to rebuild the Shore sustainably.

Thanks for being there,

Doug O’Malley
Director

Leading the way on solar

In September, Environment New Jersey released “Lighting the Way,” highlighting the solar energy boom across the country. The report found that New Jersey ranks 4th in the nation per capita for solar installations.

While New Jersey is one of a dozen states that have led the nation in solar energy with supportive policies, we have slipped from first in the country. Last year, solar capacity in New Jersey grew by 43 percent, bringing it to a total of 971 megawatts.

Solar is on the rise across the country, partially because supportive polices caused the price of solar panels to fall by 26 percent in 2012. Environment New Jersey attributes the solar boom to the leadership of past New Jersey officials and urged Gov. Chris Christie to stop putting solar’s rapid expansion at risk by raiding our clean energy funding.

Fracking waste coming to New Jersey?

Over the past year, Environment New Jersey has worked to keep the state from becoming a dumping ground for toxic fracking waste.

Fracking wastewater is laced with toxics like benzene, heavy metals and even radioactive material. It has contaminated drinking water sources from Pennsylvania to New Mexico, and last year, more than 1.3 billion gallons of fracking waste was generated in Pennsylvania.

While the initial bill to ban the dumping of fracking waste in New Jersey passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, Gov. Christie vetoed the legislation last fall. Now, Environment New Jersey is working with the Legislature to overturn the governor’s veto. On the heels of a large State House rally, the Legislature committed to hold a vote by the end of the year.
Environment New Jersey is fighting recent environmental rollbacks in New Jersey.

New Jersey’s environment faced an onslaught of attacks during the latest legislative session in Trenton.

Anti-environmental proposals that sadly had bipartisan support included legislation to allow harmful logging in state forests; a proposal to exempt sewage treatment plants from laws that protect the public from hazardous waste; and a staggering raid of New Jersey’s clean energy programs to the tune of nearly $200 million.

“These rollbacks are a serious attack on our environment,” said Doug O’Malley, director of Environment New Jersey. “Our politicians in Trenton need to strengthen protections for our state forests, waterways and environment—not weaken them.”

**Forests, rivers, clean energy affected**

One of the most egregious rollbacks pushed by the legislature was a proposal to open up our public lands—including New Jersey’s great state forest system—to destructive logging. This could mean pristine state forests come under threat from chainsaws and intrusive roads, industrial activity and the irreparable harm that will come with it. When Gov. Christie reviewed this legislation, instead of calling for stronger protections for New Jersey’s state forests, he conditionally vetoed environmental safeguards built into the bill.

“Our state forests and public lands are the jewels of New Jersey that need greater protections, not weaker ones,” said O’Malley. “This bill fails them.”

Another environmental rollback being pushed in the whirlwind of anti-environmental activity in Trenton was an effort to allow sewage plants to discharge dangerous pollution into our rivers and streams with impunity. At the same time, the legislation would limit the ability to enforce violations of New Jersey’s anti-pollution laws for these sewage treatment facilities.

At least for the time being, the legislation to weaken New Jersey’s clean water laws was delayed in the state Senate. Environment New Jersey will continue to watchdog this proposal and work to mobilize citizen opposition to it during the remainder of the legislative session.

Especially with outdated stormwater systems across the state, which allow untreated sewage to be dumped in our waterways during rainstorms, we need tighter standards to protect our waterways, not broader loopholes.

The most egregious budget raid is the staggering $194 million taken from New Jersey’s clean energy programs.

“As we approach the one-year anniversary of Sandy, it’s appalling that Gov. Christie would eviscerate the exact programs that help us reduce global warming pollution and address extreme weather events,” O’Malley said.

**Gina McCarthy confirmed as new EPA administrator**

On July 18, in a bipartisan vote of 59 to 40, the U.S. Senate confirmed Gina McCarthy as administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The confirmation came within a month of President Barack Obama instructing the EPA to cut carbon pollution from power plants as part of his plan to fight global warming.

In response, Doug O’Malley, director of Environment New Jersey, released the following statement:

“Gina McCarthy’s confirmation is long-awaited good news for the planet and New Jersey and should not surprise anyone remotely familiar with her record.

“McCarthy’s stellar work under both Republican and Democratic governors, coupled with her track record at the EPA, proves that when it comes to protecting our families’ health and environment, it isn’t about which party or who you work for. It’s about whether you can get the job done. Gina McCarthy can get the job done.

“Working with a variety of stakeholders over the past four years, McCarthy was integral to several historic initiatives, including new, cleaner car standards that represent the biggest step the U.S. has ever taken to get off oil and tackle global warming; the first-ever federal limits on mercury pollution from power plants; and the first-ever proposed federal limits on carbon pollution from new power plants.

“I am confident that McCarthy will continue to put her professionalism and commitment to work developing solutions to the formidable environmental challenges we still face.”
Environment New Jersey

Our mission
We all want clean air, clean water and open space. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That’s the idea behind Environment New Jersey. We focus exclusively on protecting New Jersey’s air, water and open space. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

Restore the Shore
This summer, Environment New Jersey staff hit the streets, talking to more than 50,000 people across the state about rebuilding the Shore sustainably in the wake of Superstorm Sandy. With offices in Ridgewood, Montclair and New Brunswick, we talked to New Jersey residents about how we can rebuild the Shore in ways that will reduce flooding and keep pollution from fouling our beautiful bays and beaches. Our staff collected more than 10,000 petitions to state decision-makers calling for action on sustainable rebuilding practices.

For years, pollution and bacteria have been washing into the waters where we swim and fish, which leads to beach closings. Every time it rained, pollution from our streets and lawns washed into outdated storm drains, sometimes mixing with sewage, and flowed on to our beaches. To be able to reduce pollution and flooding, the petition called for protecting our beaches and communities by upgrading our outdated and damaged stormwater infrastructure and protecting our natural areas along the Shore. We also called on the Environmental Protection Agency to propose a strong rule to reduce stormwater pollution, which has long been a scourge for our beaches and bays, especially Barnegat Bay.

more inside
Historic step in fighting global warming; Pushing for ban on toxic fracking waste; and more.

Beach closure in Lavallette, N.J.