Pollution limits needed within 18 months

New Jersey is on the verge of making significant progress toward cleaning up and protecting the Jersey Shore and Barnegat Bay, thanks to three new laws signed by Gov. Chris Christie and supported by Environment New Jersey staff and members.

But to achieve cleaner coastal waters and fewer beach closings, we need the governor to set a strict “pollution diet” for the Shore—and soon.

This summer, Environment New Jersey is redoubling our efforts by calling on the governor to set firm limits on the pollution allowed at the Shore within 18 months—the kind of strong, timely action required to restore Barnegat Bay and other coastal waters to health.

Grassroots support seen as the key

Last summer, Environment New Jersey staff knocked on more than 100,000 doors and delivered more than 5,000 petitions to legislators as our advocates in Trenton called for action on the Shore. Our researchers also documented how a “development binge” on the Shore has led to a decline in water quality, as reported in the study “Tale of Two Shores.”

Gov. Christie signed into law three of the bills we supported. One new law addresses fertilizer runoff—the source of 15% of the Bay’s nitrogen pollution and a trigger of the algae blooms that cause red, brown or green tide. Under the law, a more environment-friendly form of fertilizer will be sold, with fewer harmful effects for the Bay and the Shore. The other bills curb pollution from stormwater, which washes chemicals and bacteria from pavement into coastal waters.

A call to Gov. Christie

This summer, we’re urging Gov. Christie to place hard-and-fast limits on all pollution entering the Shore and the Bay and to take a set of steps to enforce these limits.

(Visit www.EnvironmentNewJersey.org for the details.)

“The state must adopt pollution limits for the Shore right away,” said Dena Mottola Jaborska, executive director for Environment New Jersey. “A strong and comprehensive restoration effort must begin now.”
When I was a kid growing up in Hoboken and Old Bridge, the Jersey Shore was a big part of my family’s summer vacation. When medical waste and garbage washed ashore in Monmouth and Ocean counties in the late 1980s, my family, along with many others, stopped going to the Shore.

Fortunately, environmentalists and community activists from across the state joined forces to demand cleaner beaches and a healthier ocean. By 1990, critical legislation cracking down on pollution had stopped much of the abuse.

The problems facing the Shore today are less visible, but no less threatening. Pollution from reckless development is leading to scores of beach closings and causing extensive damage to Barnegat Bay wildlife. Your support has helped win plans to curb this pollution. Together, we can turn these plans into action.

Sincerely,

Dena Mottola Jaborska
Executive Director

Environment New Jersey rips House budget bill

Environment New Jersey strongly criticized the budget bill approved by the U.S. House of Representatives in February. The bill included sweeping provisions that would slash the Environmental Protection Agency’s funding and curtail its authority to enforce the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act.

“This budget, which slashes EPA funding by 30 percent, is not just a drastic cut for environmental protection, but it is also a back-door maneuver to weaken the Clean Air Act,” said Doug O’Malley, field director for Environment New Jersey.


New rules would pave the way for electric cars

Environment New Jersey is advocating new rules that would create tax incentives for buying electric vehicles and require major roadways throughout the state to install charging stations.

GM, Nissan, Ford and Toyota are among the car makers announcing plans to produce electric cars within the next year. The rules we’re proposing would make electric cars more affordable and practical, thereby helping New Jersey to lower the global warming emissions, oil use and smog associated with gasoline-powered vehicles.

“We want to get ahead of the curve,” said Matt Elliott, our global warming and clean energy advocate. “When these cars come out, we want New Jerseyans to be hopping in the driver’s seat.”
Environment New Jersey applauded steps taken by the Obama administration in February to spur offshore wind power, including a $50 million pledge for research and development and the mapping of four prime areas for American wind farms. The largest of these “priority areas” lies miles off the Shore from Atlantic City.

“This victory will help spur the development of wind farms off the coast of New Jersey and many other Atlantic coastal states,” said Environment New Jersey’s Matt Elliott. “The Obama administration has nudged us closer to powering 1 million New Jersey homes with wind.”

Before the announcement, Environment New Jersey joined with allied groups to demonstrate support for offshore wind, delivering a letter to the president signed by more than 100 environmental groups from up and down the Atlantic seaboard. The coalition also released a new report, “Offshore Wind in the Atlantic” outlining the environmental and economic benefits of developing offshore wind power.

New Jersey leads the way
A year ago, Environment New Jersey’s campaign for offshore wind hit its first major milestone, when the state Legislature passed a bill that cleared state-level hurdles to offshore wind.

“It was a huge step forward for New Jersey, but complex federal rules still meant we wouldn’t see an offshore wind farm for at least 10 years,” said Elliott. “New Jersey was ready to lead the nation on offshore wind, but we needed the federal government to throw its support behind the project. Under federal rules, it’s faster and easier to build a new coal plant than a wind farm.”

1 million New Jersey homes, powered by the wind
By harnessing the wind that blows off New Jersey’s coast, we can generate home-grown, pollution-free energy. For too long, dirty energy companies have called the shots in New Jersey. They’ve polluted our air, poisoned our water and made our state one of the nation’s most contaminated. At the same time, we’ve left our vast supply of home-grown clean energy sources almost completely untapped.

The Atlantic states are uniquely positioned to forge a clean, independent energy future. The region’s current dependence on fossil fuels has far-reaching and devastating impacts—affecting residents’ health, draining their pocketbooks, causing air and water pollution, and warming the planet.

“Many Atlantic states have already become leaders in energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies that create jobs, lower energy costs, cut pollution, and reduce our reliance on dirty fossil fuels,” said Elliott. “These efforts will greatly benefit people and wildlife for generations to come.”

Our hearts go out to the people of Japan who, after seeing a massive earthquake and tsunami strike their country, were forced to contend with an escalating nuclear crisis.

At press time, the consequences were still unfolding: Drinking water samples in Tokyo were contaminated with radioactive iodine at a level dangerous to infants; the sale of a dozen types of produce from the Fukushima region were banned due to potentially dangerous levels of radioactivity; hundreds of thousands of people were evacuated from the area around the reactors; and high radiation levels were found in the nearby ocean waters.

Should we be concerned about America’s 104 nuclear plants, especially Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station in Lacey Township, New Jersey, posing similar risks to our children’s health and our environment? Based on our analysis, yes. At its most basic level, Mother Nature proved stronger than the best safeguards that Japan could design. Why would we be different?

Environment New Jersey is urging the Obama administration and others to improve the safety of existing nuclear plants, declare a moratorium on new plants, and begin to responsibly phase out our use of nuclear power in favor of clean, renewable energy, like wind and solar power.

Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station is the same flawed design as reactors at Fukushima, Japan and is the nation’s oldest.
Energy companies could be allowed to drill for natural gas in Pennsylvania as close as 500 feet from the Delaware River watershed, which provides drinking water for more than 15 million people across the tri-state area.

Environment New Jersey, along with PennEnvironment, the Delaware RiverKeeper and others, helped to collect close to 30,000 petitions opposing the plan this April, delivering them to the Delaware River Basin Commission, the multi-state agency that will decide the restrictions to be placed on gas drilling in the watershed.

“This lax proposal is a carte blanche invitation to the gas industry to start drilling with—and dumping—a toxic blend of chemicals into the Delaware,” said Doug O’Malley, field organizer for Environment New Jersey. “We need the public to tell gas drillers not to mess with the Delaware.”