

American Littoral Society - Clean Ocean Action Pinelands Preservation Alliance – Save Barnegat Bay

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Bay Advocates Issue Evaluation of Christie Administration’s 10-Point “Comprehensive Action Plan” to Protect Barnegat Bay

Score Card Outlines Progress, Setbacks and Hope for Success

Ocean County: On December 9, 2010, Governor Chris Christie announced a comprehensive action plan to address the ecological health of the 660-square-mile Barnegat Bay watershed. Now that the plan has had the opportunity to advance for over three years, environmental groups working to protect and restore the Bay are offering their evaluation of how they feel the plan is progressing.

On Friday, April 25th NJDEP Commissioner Martin is expected to deliver the Department’s official public update on the plan.

The American Littoral Society, Clean Ocean Action, Pinelands Preservation Alliance and Save Barnegat Bay have evaluated the plan thus far and have offered “Thumbs Up”, “Thumbs Down” and “Fingers Crossed” on each of the 10-Points.

The groups are supportive of the plan and maintain that it provides good framework to build upon, but have urged the Christie Administration to take stronger legal steps to clean up the Bay.

“Barnegat Bay is sick and we need to take immediate and aggressive steps to get it back to health” said Britta Wenzel, Executive Director of Save Barnegat Bay said, “The most important and immediate step that the Governor needs to take is to declare the Bay impaired for nutrients. An impairment designation under the Clean Water Act is the strongest step on the path to a healthy Bay”.

Cara Muscio, Coastal Programs Coordinator at Clean Ocean Action stated “The Barnegat Bay is an icon of the Jersey Shore and needs our help. Governor Christie’s 10-point is an important piece of the overall strategy to heal the bay; however, to be successful all actions in the plan must be implemented to their fullest potential. While progress has been made in some areas, the state must now prioritize the actions to reduce sources of pollution.”

The groups called for more strategic investment in eliminating the pollution entering the Bay.

“The investment in recovering from Hurricane Sandy should be leveraged to help restore Barnegat Bay. We have outdated stormwater systems throughout the watershed that are not effectively controlling pollution. The recovery funds being invested by New Jersey should help get Barnegat Bay back on its feet, as well as the communities on its shores” stated Helen Henderson, Atlantic Coast Project Manager for the American Littoral Society.

“The challenges facing Barnegat Bay haven’t changed and time continues to pass by without the action needed to reverse the decline in the Bay’s health. The Governor’s Plan lays the foundation for steps that are needed to improve the Bay, but lack of action is leaving a good plan on the shelf” stated Jaclyn Rhoads, Assistant Executive Director at the Pinelands Preservation Alliance.

The groups have initiated an online petition for the public to request the administration declare the Bay impaired for nutrients under the Clean Water Act. This action is the first step in developing a pollution reduction budget (Total Maximum Daily Load).

http://www.change.org/petitions/new-jersey-department-of-environmental-protection-commissioner-martin-declare-barnegat-bay-impaired-under-the-clean-water-act?recruiter=2373822&utm_campaign=twitter_link&utm_medium=twitter&utm_source=share_petition