New Jersey Sierra Club
2020 Legislative Priorities & Regulatory Agenda

Legislative Priorities

100% Renewable by 2035, Zero Carbon by 2050, Moratorium on Fossil Fuels: Climate change is happening and happening faster than ever. In order to fight climate change by reducing greenhouse gasses, we must take bold action against fossil fuels. That is why Governor Murphy must put in place a moratorium on all new fossil fuel projects. There are over a dozen fossil fuel projects proposed in New Jersey that would increase GHGs by over 32%. We need to be focusing on renewable energy, such as solar and wind power, that does not release harmful pollution that exacerbate the effects of climate change. In order for New Jersey to combat climate change, we need to focus on goals of 100% renewable energy by 2035 and zero carbon by 2050.

Electric Buses and Trucks: NJ Transit should be moving toward 100% electric by 2030, but instead they are planning to purchase gas-guzzling trains and buses that will remain in the fleet for another 20 years. New Jersey needs to be moving forward on electrifying our transportation to reduce costs and help our lungs. Electric buses and trains are 70% cheaper to operate and would help move New Jersey toward 100% clean energy by 2050.

Environmental Justice Legislation: Environmental Justice language needs to be much stronger in legislation and, more importantly, the Energy Master Plan. Communities in New Jersey continue to choke on dirty emissions and are seeing more asthma and health impacts because of air pollution. That is why it is critical that environmental justice language should be included in all of the program areas of energy legislation. We need to focus on reducing harmful air pollution in areas that receive a disproportionate amount.

Community Solar: Community solar is important for our environment and economy because it allows any ratepayer to subscribe to an off-site solar installation. This allows people who are unable to install solar panels on their own property benefit from solar energy. Towns or non-profits could qualify as well, helping whole areas go off the grid, saving money and reducing air pollution. For years, New Jersey has been blocking it from happening and now that it finally is, we need to do it right. We should be creating a full community solar program such as the ones in Massachusetts or Maryland, so we can advance solar power for everyone in this state.

Getting Rid of the Solar Cost Cap: We are heading into a crisis for solar energy. We need to do something about the cost cap before the cap is exceeded and the solar program ends. We should be completely getting rid of the cap. We don’t have caps on energy from coal, nuclear, oil, or gas. Having a cap on solar energy makes no sense. We also have to factor in legacy SRECs as well as transition SRECs. We need to focus on creating a robust solar program that will help us reach our clean energy goals.
**NJ Green New Deal:** Climate change impacts are worse and happening faster. New Jersey is seeing more flooding and more health impacts from climate change. Our state is also battling damaging fossil fuel projects like offshore drilling, natural gas power plants, pipelines, and fracking. Enough is enough already. The Green New Deal resolution is the first comprehensive step towards creating policies and programs in place to reduce our climate impact. We need to transition our economy to a greener and cleaner economy.

**Bottle Bill:** Every year we pick up 6 million pounds of cans and bottles and other floatables along our roadways. A Bottle Bill is a critical step that provides incentives for people to reduce our bottle waste and increase recycling rates. New Jersey only recycles 50% of cans and bottles while Michigan, with a Bottle Bill, recycles 97%.

**Prevent Backsliding to State Environmental Protections:** The Trump Administration has continuously rolled back critical rules and regulations that protect our clean water, clean air, open space, endangered animals and more. We need to build a green wall around our state to make sure New Jersey will not succumb to those weakened rollbacks. Legislation like A5033 (Pinkin) is important because it will help keep our state’s standards protected. It will authorize DEP rulemaking to prevent backsliding of certain state environmental regulations due to changes in federal laws or regulations. New Jersey must prevent the federal government from weakening and rolling back environmental regulations that public health. New Jersey must stand up to Trump by making sure to keep strict standards in place.

**Chlorpyrifos Ban:** The state legislature and Governor Murphy should be moving to ban chlorpyrifos so that our health, especially our children’s health is protected. Dangerous insecticides like chlorpyrifos are destroying our bee population and are also harmful to human health. Chlorpyrifos was originally created as a nerve agent, and children and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to its damaging effects.

**Coastal Commission and Fixing Coastal Area Facility Review Act (CAFRA):** Climate impacts are getting worse but what is even more alarming is that the Murphy Administration has shown no sense of urgency to strengthen mitigation programs that will protect this state from climate change, or even the next storm. Instead of action, the state is still building in flood prone areas, they have failed to fix CAFRA rules, and are proposing to build a sewer plant in Fortescue. We must start taking real actions to fight climate change now. We are still the only state in the region without a Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan. We need to move forward with a Coastal Commission, and DEP needs to use the latest science to put climate and sea level rise in their rules.

**Strengthening Public Beach Access Rule:** People of New Jersey have a right to beaches and waterfront that belong to them. But those rights are too often violated by towns in NJ. Towns are denying people from getting to their beaches by failing to provide things like bathrooms and parking lots. We are concerned the rules in the Public Beach Access Rule can be subject to challenge by towns who want to keep us out. Towns that have been denying access or making it difficult for people to access beaches will continue to do so. Too many communities want our money, but they don’t want us on their beaches. We need to make sure that DEP requires towns to not only provide public access to their beaches, but amenities like bathrooms and parking lots.
**Protecting Our Drinking Water:** There are too many problems in New Jersey from one county to the next. Whether it is PFOAs, volatile organic chemicals, cyanobacteria in our reservoirs, or lead. For too long, New Jersey has failed to adequately protect its drinking water and is putting the public at risk. Our Water Supply Master Plan is still outdated, and DEP has yet to adopt strict standards for hazardous chemicals in our drinking water. The Drinking Water Quality Institute, the agency that is responsible for setting standards and protecting public health, has not met in over a year. Water quality standards for dangerous chemicals like PFOAs, PFOs, lead, 1,2,3-TCP, need to be adopted. We also need to work on fixing our lead problem.

**Urban Park Funding:** For years, state parks and parks in urban areas have been significantly underfunded. It is critical that the Murphy Administration and the state legislature find a more equitable way to fund our parks and open spaces. Fast-growing places like Jersey City and New Brunswick need more funding for their parks. We need money to open new parks and plant trees and restore natural habitats in the parks we have. We need more money for capital improvements in all of our parks. That will require a more stable source of funding.

**Bear Management:** The 2019 NJ Black Bear hunt killed a total of 315 bears. The bear hunt was initially created to get rid of aggressive and nuisance bears, but bear sightings and nuisance numbers have dropped by 12.5%. New Jersey needs to transition to a real management plan, one that includes strong education and uses warning signs in the region, education materials at trail heads, enforcing not feeding bears, and garbage management. There needs to be warning signs in bear country with post at all trailheads with Do’s and Don’ts in bear country. We also need to teach people how to bear-proof their property, including the importance of having no garbage at night and bear proof containers. These will do a lot more to manage the bear population than having an unnecessary hunt.

**Regulatory Agenda**

**Reverse Christie’s Rollbacks:** So far, Murphy’s DEP has failed to reverse Christie’s rollbacks that weaken protections for clean air, clean water, and climate change. We need the DEP to get rid of Christie’s rollbacks to important environmental rules like Flood Hazard Rules, Waiver Rule, Stormwater Rules, Wetlands Rules, Stream Encroachment Rules, CAFRA Rules, and Coastal Zone Management Rules. Murphy needs to work with DEP, the BPU, and other agencies to reverse Christie’s weakened rules. We need him to protect our environment for us, our grandkids, and our great-grandkids. Given New Jersey’s environmental problems, not being Christie is just not enough anymore.

**Climate Change:** New Jersey is already seeing the impacts of climate change every day with chronic flooding, storm surges, and sea level rise. We are still the only state in the region without a Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan. Instead of promoting more fossil fuel projects, New Jersey needs to focus on renewable energy such as solar and wind. DEP has had the authority to set standards for CO₂ and greenhouse gases since 2005. They need to immediately move to set these standards, including regulating the Air Pollution Control Act and Title V permits to stop new plants and reduce existing pollution.
**DEP Needs to Set Standards to Protect Our Environment:** Last year, the DEP designated 749 miles of waterways as C1 streams for ecological value and fishery resources. However, they failed to move forward on designating C1 streams for drinking water and recreational value. They also have defaulted to federal rules on offshore air pollution and standards for lead in our drinking water at 15ppb. Our lead standards need to be lowered to at least 5ppb, or ideally 1ppb because any lead in drinking water is unsafe. The DEP has set strong standards for PFAS in our drinking water, but they have yet to adopt them. It is critical that they adopt these standards to protect the people of New Jersey from dangerous forever chemicals.