



*Bayshore Regional Watershed Council*

*NJ Audubon Society*

*NJ Environmental Lobby*

*NJ PEER*

*NJ Public Interest Research Group*

*NJ Chapter of the Sierra Club*

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## Environmental Groups Launch Major Shore Initiative

### Announcement coincides with Friday's Legislative Hearing

Trenton – Setting the stage for Friday's Senate Environment Committee hearings on shore related issues, a coalition of environmental groups called on state officials to embrace an emergent national consensus on the need for urgent changes to the way the State manages the coast and ocean.

The Senate hearings come amidst a series of recent shore related controversies. Scientific reports, for example, suggest that the NJ shore is increasingly vulnerable to catastrophic effects of a Katrina-like storm, made worse by NJ's pattern of coastal over-development.

“Developers are paving over the shore with more strip malls, parking lots, and McMansions,” said Doug O’Malley, Field Director NJ Public Interest Research Group (NJPIRG). “They’re putting thousands of people’s lives and billions of dollars of public infrastructure in harms way – even the insurance industry now realizes the magnitude of the threats.”

Mounting ecological stresses to bays and estuaries, non-point source water pollution, over-pumping of coastal aquifers, salt water intrusion, water supply shortages, over fishing, and increasing competition for public access to scarce ocean natural resources – especially beaches and fisheries – add a sense of urgency to other long running Jersey Shore debates.

Fueled by this sense of urgency, a coalition of major national, NJ, and local environmental groups conducted research and held a series of roundtable discussions to develop a coastal and ocean action agenda.

Drawing in part on the recent findings and recommendations of two national blue ribbon ocean panels the groups identified three primary threats to the Jersey Shore economy and ecosystems:

- 1) Over-development in the coastal zone
- 2) Increasing vulnerability to catastrophic storms and sea level rise
- 3) Outdated state fisheries management policies that neglect ecosystem protection



In order to reduce these threats, the Coalition recommends that the State:

- 1) Adopt ecosystem based management as State policy to “protect, maintain, and restore healthy coastal and ocean ecosystems, and adopt an ecosystem-based approach to ocean management.”<sup>1</sup>

"We are having one of the best summers ever at the Jersey Shore especially in this heat. However what we all are enjoying now will not be here for our children unless we start making changes to better protect our coast," stated Jeff Tittel Director NJ Sierra Club. "We must start to manage our oceans as an ecosystem and stop pollution and over development from destroying what we love. We call on Governor Corzine to exercise leadership by issuing an Executive Order that establishes ecosystem based management as the cornerstone for NJ's ocean and coastal zone protections."

"For too long, land use, natural resource, fisheries, and water quality decisions that impact the coast have been piecemeal and uncoordinated," said Benson Chiles, of Environmental Defense, and the coalition's facilitator. "It's time for New Jersey to step up to the plate to protect the Jersey shore."

- 2) Implement stronger coastal land use planning and growth management controls to tighten current restrictions on shore development, particularly to limit development in environmentally sensitive lands and in know mapped hazard zones.

"In nature, everything is connected: air, land, water, fish, and wildlife. However, our environmental management framework does not reflect this ecological reality," said Joanna Wolaver, Conservation Project Coordinator at NJ Audubon Society. "The decline in migratory bird populations due to the overharvest of horseshoe crabs is a poster child for the need for an ecosystem-based management policy. We must embrace this policy in order to prevent similar situations in the future and to better manage for threats to and connections between our precious coastal natural resources."

- 2) Ensure a more holistic approach to fisheries management by refocusing the State's fisheries management law on the entire marine ecosystem instead of individual species, create more balanced representation on decision-making bodies and emphasize science-based decision making.

"One third of New Jersey's fifteen highly prized fish species are overfished or experiencing overfishing" says Michael Pisauro of the New Jersey Environmental Lobby. "New Jersey needs a 21<sup>st</sup> century fisheries management policy that is up to the task of sustaining all fish populations for the long haul while also protecting the entire marine ecosystem."

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The **Coastal Ocean Coalition** is a network of environmental organizations working to conserve, protect and restore New Jersey's marine environment. Partner organizations include the Bayshore Regional Watershed Council, Environmental Defense, NJ Audubon Society, NJ Environmental Lobby, NJPIRG, NJ PEER, NJ Sierra Club, NRDC, and the Surfrider Foundation.  
[www.coastaloceancoalition.org](http://www.coastaloceancoalition.org)

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<sup>1</sup> For more information in Ecosystem Based Management, please visit  
[http://compassonline.org/files/inline/EBM%20Consensus%20Statement\\_FINAL\\_July%2012\\_v12.pdf](http://compassonline.org/files/inline/EBM%20Consensus%20Statement_FINAL_July%2012_v12.pdf)