

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Recognizes Retirement of Secretary of Agriculture Douglas Fisher

06/30/2023

Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison III to Lead Department

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today marked the retirement of Department of Agriculture Secretary Douglas Fisher. Fisher has served as Secretary since 2009 under the Corzine Administration and after 14 years of dedicated service to the state's agricultural community, his retirement is effective tomorrow, July 1, 2023. Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison III will direct the department, assuming the responsibilities of Secretary.

"Since 2009, Secretary Fisher has been a steadfast advocate for the Garden State's agricultural community," **said Governor Murphy**. "From expanding agritourism to combating food insecurity, Secretary Fisher has dedicated his career to preserving New Jersey's agricultural roots, while exemplifying a sincere commitment to this state and serving the public. I wish him nothing but the best and congratulate him for all he has accomplished at the Department of Agriculture."

"While the agricultural community is losing a fierce advocate and friend, I am confident that Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison III will lead the Department with diligence and dedication," **continued Governor Murphy**. "As Assistant Secretary and Director of Marketing and Development, Joe has played a critical role in ensuring that the importance of our agricultural heritage and industry is communicated throughout the state. His years of experience, coupled with his unique insight, will serve as assets to the Department."

"I am blessed to have the privilege of serving the public in my career in government and have always strived as Secretary of Agriculture to bear in mind how we could help not only the industry, but also all residents whose lives are enhanced by agriculture in our state," **said Secretary Doug Fisher**. "I sincerely thank Governor Murphy as well as Governors Christie and Corzine, under whom I have served, and who showed faith in me throughout my over 14 years in this position."

"As Secretary Fisher retires, he leaves an illustrious mark on agriculture in New Jersey," **said Assistant Secretary Joe Atchison III**. "His ability to understand the broad range of sectors, and having an exceptional knowledge of the legislative component of the position, is a unique gift that has benefited farmers and agriculture-related businesses in immeasurable ways during the last 14-plus years. Looking forward, the Department's goal is to continue to advance the industry well into the future."

Joe Atchison III, Assistant Secretary and Director of Marketing and Development for the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, joined the Department in July 2005 as a Marketing Specialist. Through the years, Atchison advanced to Coordinator of Agricultural Marketing and then to Division Director of Marketing and Development before being named Assistant Secretary in January 2022. As Assistant Secretary, Atchison is familiar with all the facets of the Department operations and oversees the Fiscal, IT, and Human Resources units. He also fulfills the duties of the Secretary of Agriculture when the Secretary is unavailable.

In his role as Division Director, Atchison oversees all of the Department's agricultural marketing efforts primarily under the banner of the Jersey Fresh branding program. During his tenure, the Division has begun a transition from an Organic Certification program to a program that offers technical, educational, and marketing support for organic and regenerative farming operations. Additionally, the Department has introduced a Jersey Raised livestock marketing program and is working to add livestock processors in the state to reduce travel and wait times for livestock producers. The Division of Marketing and Development also administers a suite of regulatory services including food safety inspection and enforcement; regulation of the state's commercial dairy, feed, and fertilizer industries; commodity import inspections; and other programs. The Division administers more than \$5 million in annual grant-funded programs. Joe Atchison III holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Rutgers University School of Business in Management and Marketing. He and his family live in Cherry Hill, NJ.

For a photo of Joe Atchison III, click here

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[Education \(/governor/initiatives/#Education\)](/governor/initiatives/#Education)

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[Health \(/governor/initiatives/#Health\)](/governor/initiatives/#Health)

[Law & Justice \(/governor/initiatives/#Justice\)](/governor/initiatives/#Justice)

[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

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[Administrative Orders \(/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)

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[Advice and Consent Appointments \(/governor/news/acappointments\)](/governor/news/acappointments)

[Statements on Legislation \(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)

[Administration Reports \(/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)

[Transition Reports \(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)

[Press Kits \(/governor/news/press\)](/governor/news/press)

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