



Home | Newsroom | Media | Administration | NJ's Priorities | Contact Us

Press Releases | Public Addresses | Executive Orders | Press Kit | Reports

Home > Newsroom > Press Releases > 2010 > Governor Chris Christie Takes Action to Protect and Restore Barnegat Bay

Governor Chris Christie Takes Action to Protect and Restore Barnegat Bay

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Addresses nutrient runoff, soil restoration, and stormwater basin repairs

Trenton, NJ – Following through on his pledge to fulfill a top environmental priority, Governor Chris Christie today signed into law three bills to improve the health of Barnegat Bay, as components of his comprehensive plan for the long-term restoration of this 660-square mile ecological gem and his commitment to improving water quality statewide.

The bills target nutrient runoff from lawn and landscape fertilizers, soil restoration, and stormwater basin repairs, to address three key issues of a comprehensive 10-point Barnegat Bay restoration plan the Governor announced last month.

"Today marks another turning point for Barnegat Bay, one that ends years of talk and study, and implements an action plan aimed at providing solid solutions to restore the environmental health of this incredible New Jersey resource," said Gov. Chris Christie. "We owe it to future generations to stop the talk and act now."

"Basing our efforts on science and facts, we are moving ahead to deal with longstanding and complex issues of Barnegat Bay, to prevent further degradation of the Bay and begin its long-awaited restoration," said Gov. Christie, who signed the landmark bills at a ceremony today at the Skippers Cove Beach Club, overlooking Barnegat Bay in Ocean Township.

The comprehensive Barnegat Bay plan, which includes the closure of the Oyster Creek nuclear generating station by the end of 2019, addresses long- and short-term needs of the Bay. It fulfills the Governor's commitment to make it a priority to deal with the deteriorating ecological health of Barnegat Bay.

Bill A-2290 establishes the strictest-in-the-nation standards to control the amount and content of fertilizer applied to lawns. This will reduce the amount of nutrients, including nitrogen and phosphorous, that ultimately end up in waters like Barnegat Bay, affecting ecological health.

Bill A-2501 updates statewide soil erosion and sediment control standards so that soils can properly absorb and control stormwater runoff. This will help address problems at many construction sites, where soils get compacted to such a degree that water simply runs off into our waterways, carrying pollutants and nutrients as they go.

Bill A-3606 requires the State Department of Transportation to inventory and assess stormwater basins it owns and operates in the Barnegat Bay watershed, and to include needed repairs or replacements in its capital project plans. Faulty basins result in pollution washing directly into Barnegat Bay.

"These measures will enhance our short-term efforts to improve Barnegat Bay, part of what will be a long-term project to reverse decades of declining ecological health," said DEP Commissioner Martin. "And they also will have environmental benefits statewide."

As part of the Barnegat Bay improvement effort, Governor Christie today also announced that the DEP has adopted rules establishing a "Narrative Nutrient Criteria" for Barnegat Bay and all New Jersey coastal waters. The measure, signed last week by Commissioner Martin, includes a detailed scientific study of all facets of nutrients that enter the Bay, and will give the DEP a wealth of information on which to base future decisions on how to deal with water quality issues.

The Barnegat Bay watershed encompasses most of 33 municipalities in Ocean County and four towns in Monmouth County. Its environmentally sensitive estuarine system consists of aquatic vegetation, shellfish beds, finfish habitats, waterfowl nesting grounds and spectacular vistas, as well as a population of more than 500,000 people, which more than doubles during the summer season.

There have been a host of studies done on the estuary for decades, and in 1995 it was designated as an estuary of national significance. Ecological problems have long been observed but identifying and quantifying the specific causes of its decline have proven difficult. The DEP, scientists and Bay advocates have been working to find the causes of the decline.

Increased nutrient loadings have been found to be the source of many problems at Barnegat Bay. Nutrients mostly enter the bay in stormwater runoff, via surface and groundwater flow. The nutrients, phosphorous and nitrogen are contained in fertilizer, pet waste, septic system discharges and boat waste discharges.

As the areas surrounding the Bay have developed over recent decades, there has been a decrease in the natural

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landscape, which works to filter these pollutants from entering the Bay, and an increase in impervious cover, such as pavement and buildings, which limits the ability of the land to regulate what gets into the Bay.

There is also a need to repair, clean and retrofit many stormwater basins to capture polluting runoff before it enters Barnegat Bay.

The comprehensive Barnegat Bay plan is available [here](#).

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