



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Lawrence Hajna (609) 984-1795
Lawrence Ragonese (609) 292-2994
Bob Considine (609) 984-1795

**CHRISTIE ADMINISTRATION OUTLINES ACHIEVEMENTS OF BARNEGAT BAY
ACTION PLAN AS VOLUNTEERS FAN OUT FOR BLITZ CLEANUPS
COMMISSIONER MARTIN ALSO LAUNCHES PILOT POST-SANDY LIVING SHORELINES
RESTORATION PROJECT**

(14/P32) TRENTON – Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Bob Martin today identified the Christie Administration’s accomplishments in its action plan for restoring the Barnegat Bay during the kickoff of the Barnegat Bay Blitz watershed-wide cleanup through Ocean and Monmouth counties.

After Commissioner Martin’s update, thousands of local volunteers, students and DEP staff fanned out across the estuary’s watershed to clean up trash and debris as part of the massive Blitz effort, which raises awareness of the Governor’s action plan and the bay’s recovery efforts.

“Superstorm Sandy hit the Barnegat Bay region extremely hard,” Commissioner Martin said during the event at Cattus Island Park in Toms River, Ocean County. “While we had to shift resources all across the state to respond to the storm, we never lost sight of the goals Governor Christie laid out when we launched the Barnegat Bay Comprehensive Action Plan at the end of 2010. Neither did residents. They continue to show their support through the Barnegat Bay Blitz, which is an important part of the effort by raising public awareness about the complex ecological challenges the bay faces.”

“We have many accomplishments to celebrate today,” Commissioner Martin added. “We have made significant progress in improving our scientific understanding of the bay, established a first-time comprehensive water quality monitoring network, preserved thousands of acres of ecologically sensitive lands, implemented the nation’s toughest fertilizer law, and funded projects to improve the quality of water that enters the bay from the land.”

As part of the Blitz kickoff, Commissioner Martin also joined students from Ocean County Vocational Technical School in planting coastal wetlands vegetation along the edge of the bay. The plantings are part of a pilot Living Shorelines restoration project, the first of many expected around the bay post-Sandy.

The DEP last year adopted rules allowing for projects that create living shorelines through a simplified permit process. Living shorelines utilize strategic placement of native vegetation, sand, organic materials, and/or bivalves such as oysters, clams and mussels to reinforce shorelines and prevent flooding naturally. Living shorelines help filter out pollutants in stormwater runoff such as nitrogen that degrade water quality

Key accomplishments under the Comprehensive Plan outlined by Commissioner Martin include:

- The scheduled shutdown of the Oyster Creek nuclear reactor in Lacey Township in 2019.
- Financing approximately \$25 million in construction projects for stormwater infrastructure upgrades, supporting capital improvement projects, retrofit of storm water basins and the purchase of street sweepers to improve the quality of stormwater that flows into the bay and its tributaries.
- Implementation of the state's tough fertilizer law, which includes requirements that all fertilizer products for turf sold in New Jersey contain at least 20 percent slow release nitrogen and no phosphorous.
- Statewide post-construction soil restoration standards to be adopted later this year by the State Soil Conservation Committee to ensure soil impacted by construction projects are restored as much as possible to a natural state through aeration, re-vegetation and other means.
- Preservation of more than 3,200 acres of ecologically sensitive lands in the Barnegat Bay watershed as open space, including land in Jackson, Plumsted, Lacey, Manchester, Ocean Township, Stafford and Eagleswood.
- Evaluating local land use practices to support local governments in planning to support sustainability and resiliency in the watershed.
- Establishing an extensive monitoring water quality networking and launching a five-year ambient monitoring program that will provide the science for making decisions on how to improve water quality in the bay.
- Enhanced public education through efforts such as the Barnegat Bay Blitz, improved web resources, locally produced cable programs, the Rain Barrel Challenge in local schools, and interpretive outreach at state-managed facilities in the watershed including Island Beach State Park, the Forest Resource Education Center, the Sedge Island Conservation Center and Double Trouble State Park.
- Funding of 10 research projects to fill in scientific gaps in understanding of the challenges the bay faces. Projects include studies of the quality of bay sediments as habitat for worms, crabs and clams; the causes and impact of algae on water quality; the cause behind outbreaks of stinging sea nettles; and the distribution and abundance of zooplankton, a key part of the aquatic system's food web. Work is expected to be completed by the middle of 2015.
- Setting up 16 ecologically sensitive areas and holding compliance efforts to reduce impacts to wetlands and submerged aquatic vegetation caused by boats and personal water craft.

“This update provides a great opportunity to join together with the DEP and our many partners to clean up the entire watershed and to refocus our collective efforts on the critical actions that are needed to protect the bay, which is vital to the ecology and the economy of the Jersey Shore,” said Stanton Hales,” Executive Director of the Barnegat Bay Partnership.

The Barnegat Bay Blitz is spearheaded by the DEP in cooperation with the Barnegat Bay Partnership and some 20 other groups to bring together citizens, students, businesses and local governments to help clean up and foster a greater appreciation for the Barnegat Bay.

The Bay's 660-square-mile watershed encompasses 33 municipalities in Ocean County and four in Monmouth County. The bay is suffering from degraded water quality caused by many factors, including excessive algae growth caused by nutrients from fertilizers and other sources.

The Blitz will run today from 8 a.m. to dusk. Schools once again will be represented in force. The cleanups target a wide variety of locations, including wetlands, stream banks, storm water discharge points, school grounds, trails, docks, areas around bulkheads, and the bay itself.

Since the first Blitz in October 2011, 14,842 volunteers have cleaned up 1,721 cubic yards of trash and recyclables. The Blitz has also engaged over 20 partner companies/organizations, and 37 municipal partners. Fifty school and youth group organizations have also participated in the Blitz and/or the Rain Barrel Challenge educational competition.

“Last May, just months after Sandy hit, thousands of volunteers turned out to show their support for the bay by participating in the Blitz by removing trash and debris, much of it deposited by Sandy,” said Lynette Lurig, a DEP event coordinator.

“The passion that residents and children feel for this wonderful natural resource is infectious,” added Katie Barnett, another coordinator. “We are extremely happy that this effort has remained strong despite all that the region has been through.”

For more on the Barnegat Bay Action Plan, visit: : <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/barnegatbay/>

For more on the Barnegat Bay Blitz, visit: <http://www.nj.gov/dep/barnegatbay/bbblitz.htm>

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