

March 24, 2016

Hon. Chris Christie
Governor, State of New Jersey
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625-001

Dear Governor Christie,

We write to you in support of the state's \$15 million grant award from HUD's National Disaster Resilience Competition to undertake comprehensive regional planning to evaluate and develop effective strategies to address increased coastal flooding risks. One of the most important actions coastal communities can take to prepare for the growing threat of coastal flooding to their communities and their economic vitality is to engage in a thorough, forward-looking assessment of the accelerating risks associated with rising sea levels and increased storm severity.

This is most important for Northeastern states that are experiencing the fastest rates of sea level rise on the planet, and particularly crucial for New Jersey, which faces rapid sea-level rise exacerbated by coastal subsidence. Yet, according to a report recently released by Climate Central and ICF International, [*States at Risk: America's Preparedness Report Card*](#), New Jersey, which has the fourth-largest population at risk of coastal flooding, could significantly improve its preparedness efforts and lags behind almost every other coastal state in taking steps to prepare for future sea-level rise and coastal flooding risks. Many of our neighboring states have been more proactive in their approaches, recognizing the peril faced by residents and businesses on their coasts.

Thanks to this grant award, New Jersey now has an exceptional chance to advance its preparedness and protect its economic interests. The money the state has received affords New Jersey a singular opportunity to assist coastal areas in evaluating the implications of rising sea levels and increased flooding and strategically addressing these issues with the future in mind. This funding can help to expand significantly the detailed vulnerability analysis work NJDEP's Office of Coastal and Land Use Planning is already performing locally, by scaling this effort up to the regional level. A regional approach is critical because flood inundation and storm damage are not constrained by municipal boundaries. Elected officials from communities along New Jersey's coast are awakening to these threats and are urgently seeking direction.

We ask that, as soon as possible, the state address the pressing need for effective and resilient coastal planning by:

- Accepting the \$15 million from HUD for regional planning purposes and moving expeditiously through the HUD process to receive the funds;
- Confirming the state's commitment to using these funds to support comprehensive regional planning that will identify and address future risk using a science-based assessment of sea-level rise and increasing storm severity;
- Directing the NJDEP Office of Coastal Land Use to lead an open, inclusive and transparent process that generates regional plans within the nine affected counties.

Please contact Peter Kasabach at 609-393-0008 ext. 104 with any questions or if you need more information. We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

New Jersey Future
Peter Kasabach, Executive Director

American Littoral Society
Tim Dillingham, Executive Director

Clean Ocean Action
Cindy Zipf, Executive Director

Environment New Jersey
Doug O'Malley, Director

Housing and Community Development
Network of New Jersey
Staci Berger, Executive Director

New Jersey Association for Floodplain
Management
John Miller, Chairman, Legislative Committee

New Jersey Chapter, American Planning
Association
Charles Latini, President

New Jersey Chapter, The Nature Conservancy
Tom Wells, Director of Government Relations

NY/NJ Baykeeper
Debbie Mans, Baykeeper and Executive
Director

Pinelands Preservation Alliance
Carleton Montgomery, Executive Director
PlanSmart NJ
Ann Brady, Executive Director

Regional Plan Association
Robert Freudenberg, Director, Energy and
Environment

Cc: Commissioner Robert Martin, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
Terrence Brody, Governor's Office of Recovery and Rebuilding