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Over 23,000 Members in New Jersey

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New DEP Commissioner Attends Chapter Meeting

by Gina Corola and Dick Colby

Bradley Campbell, newly installed Commissioner of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, was an honored guest at the Chapter Executive Committee's monthly meeting on Feb 9, held at Chatham Boro Library.

Jeff Tittel, our Executive Director, introduced Brad as formerly Director of EPA Region III (Philadelphia), and as "already having attended one more of our meetings than his predecessor." Mr. Campbell expressed hope that this would be only the first of many chances to meet. He spoke candidly about the many difficulties he is facing in improving the functioning of the DEP. He also said:

- Enforcement of regulations will be a priority for him.
- He wants to bring together the DEP's Natural Resources Branch and its Regulatory elements.
- He is planning a week of press conferences to put all issues on the table.

Club members, led by our Chair Tina Schvejda, offered him the services of our thousands of volunteers, and noted that we also network with the members of many other environmental organizations.

Conservation Co-Chair Laura Lynch presented Campbell with a freshly prepared summary of the Chapter's major issues in New Jersey [available on the Chapter Website], and asked him to select issues that we could develop in common.

He responded that he wants initially to identify a few places in New Jersey where we could marshal many resources around a project that would have high public visibility, such as a river that

could be made fishable and swimmable, or an urban area with a high rate of child asthma that could achieve better air quality. Some members suggested a Highlands focus, or a Meadowlands focus, or making the visual impact of landing at Newark Airport more like the visual impact presented at most European airports.

Steve Knowlton, Chair of the Jersey Shore Group, suggested that the DEP tell us how much water we have and let water supply dictate how much growth we can have. Campbell replied that there should not be an absolute limit to growth. The water discussion continued with the following comments:

- Campbell hopes to promote water recycling.
- He suggested using Green Acres funds to remove pavement to improve groundwater recharge.
- Jeff Tittel noted that there is no water planning now.

• Dick Colby reported on a meeting with a major Sewage Authority at which the cost of recycling effluent for irrigating golf courses was deemed prohibitive, in part because of unreasonable DEP standards.

Bob Campbell, our Clean Air Issues Coordinator (and no relation), said there is no agency of State government advising residents on how to conserve water, and suggested that the DEP should take the lead. The Commissioner agreed that communication is weak.

Julie Akers, representing the South Jersey Group, suggested that Earth Day

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ASM. DAVID RUSSO ENDORSED FOR CONGRESS IN THE 5TH CD

by Rich Isaac, Chapter Political Chair

The Sierra Club has endorsed Assemblyman David Russo (R) for election to the U.S. Congress in the 5th District (northern edge of the State: much of Warren, Bergen, Sussex and Passaic Counties), in both the June primary and the November general elections.

This is the most important race in New Jersey this year, due to the retirement of incumbent Rep. Marge Roukema (R), and the opportunity for the District to change parties, affecting the delicate nationwide balance in Congress. Asm. Russo is not only the best-qualified candidate generally but also the only strong environmental candidate. We have worked personally with him in campaigns to preserve the Highlands and to protect our air and drinking water.

According to Jeff Tittel, Chapter Director, "Dave Russo is not only good on the issues but he is someone you can trust and work with, unlike his primary election opponent Senator Cardinale, who says he listens but won't let you speak." (Sen. Cardinale recently refused to let Jeff address his committee!) In contrast to Cardinale and some other candidates who didn't even respond to our questionnaire on environmental issues, David Russo has always responded, and in fact received our endorsement for his Assembly race every time he has run.

Russo sponsored Assembly bills that led to the cleanup of underground storage tanks, the preservation of Sterling Forest,



and campaign finance reform. He was Vice Chair of the Assembly Environmental Committee, working closely with former Assemblywoman Maureen Ogden to shape environmental legislation. According to the New Jersey Public Interest Research Group scorecard, Assemblyman Russo scored 89 in 2001 and 100 in 2000, compared to Senator Cardinale who scored 55 and 63 respectively, and Assemblyman Garrett who scored 40 and 50.

If you would like to volunteer to help Dave Russo win this important election, please call me at my home, 973-716-0297.

ENDORSED CANDIDATES FOR FEDERAL OFFICE

Senate: Sen. Robert Torricelli (D)

- NJ-1: Rep. Robert Andrews (D)
- NJ-2: Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R)
- NJ-5: Asm. David Russo (R)
- NJ-6: Rep. Frank Pallone (D)
- NJ-8: Rep. William Pascrell, Jr. (D)
- NJ-9: Rep. Steven Rothman (D)
- NJ-10: Rep. Donald Payne (D)
- NJ-12: Rep. Rush Holt (D)
- NJ-13: Rep. Robert Menendez (D)

View From The Capital: THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

by Jeff Tittel, Chapter Director

We survived the Legislature's lame duck session in January! The Quarry Bill was stopped for the sixth time. A bill giving towns the right to veto the listing of municipal property for historic preservation passed both houses of the Legislature, but we convinced the Acting Governors to exercise a pocket veto. We joined a coalition that got the Public Access to Government Records Bill passed, a major victory for open government. We ended up doing better than the budget!

Governor McGreevey has actually been appointing environmentalists to key positions, including Curtis Fisher, formerly Director of NJPIRG, now the Governor's Policy Advisor on Environment and Consumer Affairs; Jeanne Fox, former EPA Region II Administrator, now President of the Board of Public Utilities; Bradley Campbell (see story above), and Jamie Fox, former Chief of Staff to Senator Torricelli, now DOT Commissioner.

There have also been some setbacks. When Governor McGreevey told his Department chiefs to get rid of non-titled or political positions, the Community Affairs Commissioner, Susan Bass Levin, fired the entire professional staff of the Office of State Planning. Since that debacle, the Governor has issued an Executive Order on Smart Growth that

sets up a Smart Growth Policy Council, within the Governor's Office, to implement the State Plan. This Order will actually do more to implement the State Plan than any action by any previous governor. The Department of Community Affairs has hired back close to 50% of the planners who were let go, and is looking now to staff the Smart Growth Office. The unfortunate firings actually moved sprawl further up on the Governor's agenda for his first year. We went from lemons to lemonade in a matter of a week!

The most pressing issue facing the new Administration is a \$3 billion shortfall in this year's budget. Unlike the 1994 budget in which Governor Whitman cut DEP spending disproportionately, especially in areas of enforcement, this year's DEP budget cuts preserved core programs. Most of the cuts are for pork barrel projects such as \$25 million for beach replenishment, \$13 million for dam repair, money for the Green Brook Flood Control Project, dredging of marinas, and \$16 million for new sewer plants in Salem County that would have promoted sprawl.

We were able to increase funding for parks from \$10 million to \$20 million.

The Governor has said he will restore other programs we feel are important, if we can come up with offsetting savings. The real test will come with next year's budget, since the current

estimated shortfall is up to \$6 billion.

Now let's consider the changes in the Legislature. Most strikingly, for the first time in many years we have an Environmental Committee in the Assembly whose chair and a majority of members have strong environmental backgrounds. Many of our bills, that in past years never even had a hearing, have come out of the Environment Committee. The Senate will be more of a challenge since there is 20-20 deadlock between the parties, but we believe that with careful maneuvering there is a chance for many environmental bills to move. We are attempting to forge a coalition between pro-environmental Democrats and Republicans to bring our legislation onto the floor.

We can still expect many challenges, because the special interests have money, power and influence in Trenton. However, for the first time in many years there is a positive framework for change. There are many good people in powerful positions, willing to support us. Club members will still need to help make the difference, applauding when the Governor and Legislature do the right thing, and blowing whistles (sending e-mails, making phone calls, writing letters to editors, organizing delegations, cultivating the media) when they do the wrong thing. Together we can—do it!

Chapter seeks a Policy Director

Full-time position for a crafter and critic of State environmental legislation and regulations - concerned with open space protection, land use, solid waste, water supply, wastewater treatment, air pollution, other pollution abatement. Also some lobbying, and helping volunteers with local issues. Send credentials to Sunil Somalwar (Personnel Committee Chair), at address shown on the leader list (p. 12).

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