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**Environmental, Community, Business Advocates and Emergency Responders Applaud NJDEP Protecting Against Climate Threat Rules (NJPACT), Improving Safety and Resilience**

**August 6, 2024, Asbury Park, NJ -** New Jersey is experiencing frequent and intense impacts of the climate crisis with both increased flooding and heat. Yesterday, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) proposed land use rules that will modernize regulations requiring that all new development and redevelopment improves resilience to climate change.

“We need long-term solutions to address flooding and defend families and businesses from the extreme destruction taking place in our coastal communities due to more frequent and intense storms from climate change. That’s why releasing the NJPACT rules for coastal communities is so important,” said **Ed Potosnak, Executive Director, New Jersey LCV.** “Frequent flooding from severe storms is causing millions of dollars in property damage, snarling traffic, threatening clean drinking water, and endangering lives, and the problem is only getting worse. Governor Murphy promised bold solutions to protect communities and we want to thank him and his administration for taking action by publishing the NJPACT rules to safeguard coastal communities.”

“The comprehensive update to land-use regulations will help New Jersey communities, residents and businesses build and strengthen their resilience to sea-level rise, extreme weather, chronic flooding and other impacts through a suite of updates known as the [Resilient Environments And Landscapes (REAL)](https://links-2.govdelivery.com/CL0/https%3A//dep.nj.gov/njreal/%3Futm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dgovdelivery/1/010101912363f678-631e8574-af17-437e-8552-0908ac5e7bb8-000000/vuy9FxszS8zYbNy91lb6HwOU_QD02WbelUT_giNU984%3D364) reforms. REAL was developed with extensive stakeholder consultation,” NJDEP said in a statement released yesterday.

“We are pleased to see the lifesaving NJ PACT REAL rule package officially proposed in the New Jersey register after being delayed for far too long. We must adapt in order to best protect ourselves and our property from the effects of climate change, including rising sea levels, more intense storms, and expanding flood zones. Current projections indicate as much as 5.1 feet of sea-level rise is likely by 2100, and nearly two-thirds of New Jersey’s coastline is at high or very

high risk of coastal erosion. Our homes and communities are on the line, and these rules are crucial to keeping New Jerseyans safe, improving stormwater management, and safeguarding critical coastal habitat,” **said NJ Sierra Club Director Anjuli Ramos-Busot.** “Thank you to the New Jersey DEP and Governor Murphy for pushing these rules closer to the finish line, and we look forward to their swift adoption in the near future.”

The 90-day public comment period for the NJPACT REAL rules is currently open, and three public hearings are scheduled through September. The NJDEP has one year from the date of proposal publication to adopt the rules.

"We're excited to have New Jersey making bold moves in the face of climate change with the release of the proposed NJPACT Resilient Environments and Landscapes (REAL) rules. Too often, short-term and short-sighted economic gains for special interests take a front seat in our development decisions. Stormwater flooding and poor water quality already affect our residents and small businesses,” **said Nicole Miller, Chair, Newark Green Team and member, Newark Environmental Commission.**  “These hazards are only expected to worsen as the effects from climate change intensify. Hopefully with NJPACT REAL rules in effect, New Jersey will first consider the lives and livelihoods of our residents and small businesses as decisions for development are made. We must have long-term thinking for the climate problems that will affect the state both now and for generations to come."

“We applaud Commissioner LaTourette and Governor Murphy for taking a historic step in building a more resilient New Jersey,” **said Barbara Brummer, New Jersey State Director of The Nature Conservancy.** “Prioritizing sound science and proactive planning is critical to building a state that can adapt to the growing impacts of climate change. What we do today will determine how both people and wildlife are protected tomorrow and for generations to come.”

“New Jersey Future is committed to equitable and sustainable development in the face of climate change. REAL expands the area considered flood-prone to account for future sea level rise, which will change the way we build or rebuild in vulnerable areas, providing residents, municipalities, builders, and advocates with a more holistic understanding of flood risk. REAL also strengthens stormwater management requirements to address existing impervious surfaces and outdated stormwater infrastructure,” **said New Jersey Future Program Manager Lindsey Sigmund-Massih. “**NJF’s Mainstreaming Green Infrastructure Program encourages nature-based solutions to manage flood risk and improve water quality. NJ REAL aligns with our efforts by capitalizing on opportunities to retrofit areas in need of redevelopment with green stormwater infrastructure to capture excess runoff, minimize localized flooding, safeguard water quality, and mitigate increasing temperatures in urban areas.”

“Blistering heat waves, severe thunderstorms, and damaging floods are clear signs that our environment is ailing. We must reverse the degradation of our environment, which is placing New Jersey’s residents and economy at risk. Wetlands are vital in absorbing flood waters, filtering out pollution, and providing essential fish and wildlife habitat,” **said Jim Waltman, Executive Director,The Watershed Institute**. “The REAL rules will demand that before we destroy additional wetlands, we investigate whether such destruction is truly necessary or whether there are viable alternatives to the proposed action. The REAL rules also require that when old development sites are re-developed into new uses, we seize the opportunity to pull back from the wetlands and better address polluted stormwater runoff. To reduce flooding and water pollution, NJDEP should move as expeditiously as possible to adopt the REAL rule.”

“The proposed rules will have a significant impact towards improving water quality by expanding the applicability of Freshwater Wetlands and Flood Hazard Area rules and ensure greater compliance to strengthened stormwater rules,” said **Elliott Ruga, Policy & Communications Director NJ Highlands Coalition.** “Increased flooding has always presented challenges to water quality--the proposed rules are responsive to those challenges by reducing disturbances near wetlands and flood zones. They also protect headwaters by reversing the Christie-era rollbacks to water quality regulations so that source water tributaries to our important rivers, streams, ponds, lakes and reservoirs are protected again.

“New Jersey communities across the State are regularly experiencing climate change extremes. We have too much water and flash flooding except for when we don’t have enough water and we have drought. These extremes are only going to get worse for the foreseeable future. We need to take action now so that we stop putting people, businesses, and essential infrastructure in places that we know are going to flood,” **said** **Jennifer M. Coffey, Executive Director**, **Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC).** “Using scientific data to inform land use regulations and change the way and places we build to reflect the climate change impacts that are happening will make us more resilient. We need to become both stronger and smarter than future storms. We need NJDEP to adopt these rules quickly.”