



NEWS

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2011 State of the Bay Report

In our continuing effort to provide up-to-date, reliable scientific information to decision makers, managers, and the general public, the Barnegat Bay Partnership (BBP) is pleased to release its *2011 State of the Bay Report*, an examination of the status and trends of key indicators of the bay's condition from 2005-2009. Information for the report was generated by nine government agencies and other organizations, compiled by the Barnegat Bay Partnership, analyzed by regional scientists, and reviewed by members of the BBP's Science and Technical Advisory Committee. The report examines 19 indicators in three general categories (Water Quality, Water Supply, and Habitat and Living Resources) to assess the overall condition of the bay.

For the years 2005-2009, most indicators in all three categories were average to poor, and reflect the high nutrient loading to the bay, widespread algal blooms, decreased streamflow, and loss of the bay's critical wetland and eelgrass habitats upon which many species depend. Eleven of the 19 indicators show long-term negative trends. Dr. Stan Hales, the Partnership's Director noted, "The bay's poor condition is due to extensive

water quality, water supply, and habitat problems. The bay's protection and improvement will require broad and sustained efforts by all of the stakeholders interested in the economy and quality of life in the region."

Program Scientist Jim Vasslides noted that the Partnership does not have enough or consistent data to evaluate trends in roughly one-third of the indicators. "Without additional commitments to monitoring and indicator assessment, we hinder decision making about improving the bay and, in the future, will not be able to assess the effectiveness of our efforts to improve the bay."

Not all of the news is bad, though. Through the collective efforts of the Ocean County Natural Lands Trust Fund Program, the NJ Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres Program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Trust for Public Land, and other organizations, open space continues to be purchased and protected at an impressive pace. Closures of bathing beaches and shellfish beds have generally declined. Some threatened species, most notably osprey, are doing well locally. These improving conditions give us hope for the future.

In conjunction with the release of the report, the Barnegat Bay Partnership is hosting a one-day 2011 State of the Bay Conference at Ocean County College to allow researchers to present key findings from the report. The conference's afternoon session is focusing on seagrass ecology and restoration. The *2011 State of the Bay Report* can be viewed on the Barnegat Bay Partnership's website at <http://bbp.ocean.edu> or at your local branch of the Ocean County Library.