

NEW JERSEY CLEAN WATER COUNCIL

**September 9, 2008
Meeting Highlights**

Location:

New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust Conference Room, 3131 Princeton Pike, Office Building 6, Suite 201, Lawrenceville, New Jersey

Attendees:

Members: Stan Cach, Jim Cosgrove, Russ Furnari, Amy Goldsmith, Pamela Goodwin, Tony McCracken, Chris Sturm, Dan Van Abs, and Ray Zabihach.

Others: Narinder Ahuja, Rhea Weinberg Brekke, Karen Cerra, Dennis Hart, Helen Heinrich, and Gerry Skrajewski.

The meeting was convened by Russ Furnari at 10:05 a.m.

APPROVAL OF JULY 2008 MEETING HIGHLIGHTS:

Jim Cosgrove made the motion to approve July's minutes, and Tony McCracken seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as distributed.

DEP UPDATES:

Russ asked if the Freshwater Wetlands bill was actually signed. Stan will check with Tom Mica on it.

Stan reported that that the Department's Clean Water Priority List and Priority System Public Hearing will be at the Trust tomorrow (September 10th).

The Department is currently on hold for filling retirement vacancies, etc. Many important staff members left with the Early Retirement Incentive (ERI), and there have been several staff that have announced they are leaving since then.

The Permit Efficiency Task Force Report is not out yet, but the draft report is on the Web-site.

NEW BUSINESS:

Dennis Hart, Executive Director of the NJ Environmental Infrastructure Trust, was the guest speaker. Dennis said that he's glad the CWC is taking up the issue of Water Infrastructure and financing. Congress has not authorized a Clean Water Act since 1987. Now we are at a crossroads when it comes to funding of Water Infrastructure. We need a good public dialogue regarding this issue before there is a major disaster. Dennis gave a brief explanation of the Environmental Infrastructure Trust and Fund Financing Programs. After this year, the total financing that has been provided for the past 22 years is approximately \$4.5 billion. Next year may be the first year we are not able to fund all those projects who are requesting financing.

Dennis distributed copies of a Bill from Senator Lautenberg which proposes \$20 billion over five years for clean water infrastructure financing, and \$2.5 billion over five years for CSO grants. There are other Bills being proposed including a stimulus Bill. The Trust/Fund Environmental Infrastructure Financing Program that Dennis and Stan administer accomplishes three things. It protects New Jersey's water environment; it invests in water infrastructure that stimulates NJ's economy; and it provides jobs. It is a good economic program for New Jersey. 20,000 jobs are created for every \$500 million of water infrastructure projects that are constructed.

Dennis was asked what his plan would be for addressing the water infrastructure problems for the State. He said we need to target the financing to the projects that we know need repair, upgrades and improvements. Once a community comes into the Program and realizes the savings, they will utilize the Financing Program again. Dennis recognized the City of Trenton as a municipality that has come into the Program repeatedly. They have received financing for cleaning their water lines; building improvements to their water treatment plant; adding auxiliary standby power for their water treatment facility. Trenton City is a community utilizing the NJEIFP repeatedly while realizing the cost savings to their system users.

Dennis was asked if asset management can be required of the SRF Financing Program. Dennis said that in the new proposed SRF funding legislation, asset management will be required. Dennis added we don't want to punish the communities, but to let them know that we want to help them. It was suggested that if a community is doing what is right and still has a problem, maybe they could be exempt from penalty. There is a concern that the Legislature is criticizing communities who have money in reserve. Their reserve funds can be used for maintaining their system.

A comment was made that the public, and especially students, need to be educated concerning water infrastructure, recycling, conservation, etc.

The CWC asked Dennis if he could recommend a Speaker for the CWC Public Hearing. Dennis said he would follow-up to the CWC's request.

Narinder Ahuja attended the meeting to say good-bye to the Council since he took the ERI offered by the State. The CWC thanked Narinder for his efforts on the Council.

OLD BUSINESS:

The draft document regarding the 2008 CWC Public Hearing entitled "A Financially Sustainable Vision for New Jersey's Water Infrastructure" that was prepared by Chris Sturm was discussed. Chris updated the Council on the workshop discussions that were held prior to the meeting today among the Public Hearing Ad-Hoc Committee Members. The CWC members recognized Chris' efforts and commended her for preparing the excellent draft public hearing document. Chris will incorporate the comments she receives at today's meeting and distribute the revised version to the CWC Members.

The Council discussed possible Speakers/Panelists for this year's Public Hearing. It was recommended that there only be 3 invited speakers. One would be the DEP Commissioner giving the perspective of DEP; Commissioner Joe Doria would speak from the Department of Community Affairs and give the local government perspective; and Dennis would follow-up with a recommendation for a National speaker. The CWC requests speakers that are accomplished and passionate. The CWC would invite appropriate organizations to testify.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

None

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 p.m. with a motion from Ray Zabihach, and it was seconded by Jim Cosgrove.

**** The next meeting of the Clean Water Council will be on October 14, 2008, beginning at 10:00 A.M., at the NJ Environmental Infrastructure Trust, Building 6, Suite 201, 3131 Princeton Pike, Lawrenceville, NJ ****