



From the Commissioner's View

Despite New Jersey's challenging fiscal situation, the critical functions and mission of our agency remain strong.

These times present us with an opportunity to explore innovative ways to develop funding opportunities, create greater efficiency in delivering DEP services to the public and maximize our existing resources.

Several initiatives are already under way to begin addressing these challenges. One strategy is the reform package that has been introduced for the Site Remediation program. This reform will allow the department to prioritize and focus on the most egregious contaminated sites while improving business practices that have slowed our ability to clean up sites quickly, so as to protect the public health and improve the environment.

Another strategy was the establishment of the Permit Efficiency Review Task Force focusing primarily on our Land Use and Environmental Regulation programs. This group recently completed an assessment of the department's permitting processes and will be providing recommendations on how to better provide efficient service in achieving the state's goals of creating meaningful affordable houses, ensuring economic growth in our cities and reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions while protecting our environment.

As we conduct these assessments, review efficiencies and implement reform strategies, we can't lose sight of the fact that we continue to make great strides in protecting the environment and public health for all New Jerseyans, but particularly for those who reside in urban and environmental justice communities who may be impacted by cumulative environmental pollution and other threats to public health not seen in other communities throughout the state. Last year, I released the DEP Priorities and Action Plan. This Action Plan outlined, in detail, the policy priorities for the DEP and the initiatives planned and under way to address those priorities for the next couple of years. In this edition of the DEP Focus Newsletter, you will learn about some of these programs and incentives as well as some of the milestones and events that we as a department are celebrating this year. A copy of the DEP Priorities and Action Plan is available on DEP's web site at www.nj.gov/dep/commissioner/docs/priorities_and_action_plan2007.pdf

While times are challenging for all of us, I am proud of the work we continue to do and the accomplishments we achieve as we strive to protect the environment for the citizens of New Jersey.