



SOUTH JERSEY
BAYSHORE COALITION

March 30, 2010

Mr. Curt A. Gellerman, Southern Team Leader
NJ Department of Environmental Protection
Green Acres Program
PO Box 412
Trenton, NJ 08625-0412

Dorina Frizzera
NJ Coastal Management Program
401 E. State Street
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Mr. Gellerman and Ms. Frizzera:

Subject: The 2011 New Jersey CELCP Applications for the Cohansey & Tuckahoe River
Greenway Projects

Please accept this letter as confirmation of the South Jersey Bayshore Coalition's (SJBC) united support for The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's, grant application to the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program to expand both the Cohansey River and Tuckahoe River Greenways.

SJBC comprises 21 nonprofit organizations (environmental, conservation, and historic) working together to preserve the environmental integrity and cultural heritage unique to the South Jersey Bayshore region. www.sjbayshore.org

If preserved, these lands could be restored to their optimal ecological condition with appropriate areas developed to meet compatible passive recreation goals including waterfront access, trails, wildlife observation areas, and other small scale parkland infrastructure. The State Division of Fish and Wildlife has pledged to do a restoration project with various partners on each of the parcels identified.

The acquisition of the green-ribbon of mature upland forest, creeks and wetlands comprising the 35-acres Bridgeton Bluffs would finally bring the ever-present threat of development to this tract to an end. It's preservation as open space would also improve quality of life for a large economically distressed neighborhood that is home to thousands of residents who lack access to nearby walkable open space despite close proximity to this wildlife gem on the estuary. State ownership to expand the Bridgeton Bluffs Wildlife Management Area would provide the state Division of Fish & Wildlife, and its partners, opportunities to restore tidal wetlands and remove invasive species.

The acquisition of the 122-acre Cohanzick Country Club with its breathtaking views of the Cohansestuary is arguably one of the most visually stunning open spaces in Cumberland County. However, its highly buildable uplands, road frontage and commanding backdrop make this tract very attractive for development, which would mar the largely unspoiled wild and scenic characteristics of the Cohansestuary. Despite its current use as an 18-hole golf course, its 6,303 feet of fairways are buffered under an impressive canopy of mature native trees and located within the riparian zone where bald eagles are spotted on a daily basis. Preservation would provide the state Division of Fish & Wildlife opportunities to restore understory habitat and further buffer onsite creeks and wetlands.

As the second-largest coastal tributary to the Delaware Estuary, the Cohansestuary is one of the Delaware Bayshore region's most significant, yet least protected natural treasures. With almost twenty free-flowing, tidal river miles, the Cohansestuary supports several important anadromous fish runs, in addition to large oyster beds situated at the mouth of the river. Its outstanding natural, cultural and recreational resources are now recognized by many governmental and non-governmental entities. (See attachment) The Cohansestuary is well-known for supporting New Jersey's largest concentration of active nests for the state-endangered Bald Eagle, and has become a popular haunt for Sand Hill Cranes.

Cumberland County's unfortunate status as the poorest county in New Jersey has left it with few resources in which to proactively partner in efforts to preserve and restore places of exceptional environmental and public value. Preservation of these tracts will help revitalize nearby neighborhoods and enable the county to meet some of its most-pressing park and recreation needs for its larger population centers by providing generous access to the Delaware Bay's second-largest coastal river.

Preservation of the 704-acre Tuckahoe River Tract in Upper Township, Cape May represents a critical expansion to the 15,000 acre, Tuckahoe River state Wildlife Management Area. Situated within the Cape May Corridor Flyway, the tract is designated as a state Priority wildlife Habitat, and serves as an important stopover for tens of thousands of migrating birds, which depend on optimal habitat during migration. The tract's mosaic of forested wetland and uplands, in addition to tillable farmland and a freshwater lake, provide an important buffer to the approximately 490 acres of tidal wetlands. State acquisition would also further protect the boundaries of the Cape May Refuge's, Great Cedar Swamp Unit. Both, Great Cedar Swamp and the Egg Harbor River were designated into the federal Wild and Scenic River System in 1992. The state Division of Fish & Wildlife plans to discontinue agricultural use on the 35 acre farm and will facilitate a mixture of natural succession, grassland and forest restoration.

The SJBC commends the NJDEP for its steadfast commitment to protecting threatened natural resources in the Delaware Bayshore Region, and stands prepared to assist with this effort any way possible. We applaud NJDEP and the State Green Acres Program for their bold leadership in putting together two projects that protect some of the New Jersey coast's last great places.

Sincerely,

Sandy Batty, Executive Director
Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions

Matt Blake,
Project Manager Delaware Bay Program
American Littoral Society

Fred Akers, River Administrator
Great Egg Harbor Scenic and Recreational River Council

Cynthia Zirkle, President for Cohansey Area River Preservation

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Margaret O'Gorman, Executive Director
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Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries, Inc.

Eric Stiles, Vice President for Conservation and Stewardship
New Jersey Audubon Society

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NJ Sierra Club