



SOUTH JERSEY
BAYSHORE COALITION

May 4, 2011

Ms. Dorina Frizzera
Environmental Scientist I
Coastal Management Office
401-07D- NJDEP - PO Box 420
Trenton, NJ 08625-0420

RE: NJDEP CELCP Application, Sea Breeze Project Area/Zander Property

Dear Dorina:

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 (CELCP) for the acquisition of the T. Zander and Sons, Inc. (Zander) property to expand Dix Wildlife Management Area in Fairfield Township, NJ.

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

The Zander property consists of nearly a mile of shoreline and tidal wetlands bordering Delaware Bay. This property represents a unique opportunity to include 543 acres of privately-owned land in an existing large corridor of permanently protected public land for the benefit of fish and wildlife resources along the Bay. This project will establish a key linkage between the existing Dix Wildlife Management Area to the north and west as well as lands that the NJDEP is currently acquiring along the Delaware Bay beachfront to the southeast (Sea Breeze).

Dix Wildlife Management Area consists of 3,394 acres of permanently protected wetlands and uplands that are managed for fish and wildlife values. The Zander property is immediately adjacent to the Dix Wildlife Management Area and is also 2 miles from the 2,544-acre New Sweden Wildlife Management Area. New Sweden WMA is part of the 15,911-acre Nantuxent Cove Wetlands Complex, a New Jersey Audubon designated Important Bird Area (IBA), which includes the Zander property and supports several breeding pairs of Bald Eagles, Northern Harriers and Ospreys.

The most significant resource issue with regard to this property is the importance of the site and adjoining beach and emergent wetland habitat for horseshoe crab spawning and as a migratory stopover for shorebirds, waterfowl, raptors, neotropical and other long-distance passerines and raptors. The Delaware Estuary is one of the most important migratory concentration areas in the world (Kerlinger, 1989; Mabey, 1993).

Red knots migrate more than 9300 miles each spring and fall and are dependent on the availability of horseshoe crab eggs during migration. The beach supports the largest horseshoe crab population on the north side of the Delaware Bay above Gandy's Beach. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has identified the Delaware Bay as a "major North Atlantic staging area." In 2006, the US Fish and Wildlife Service designated the red knot as a candidate for Endangered Species Act protection. Acquisition of this parcel will increase the conservation and protection of critical areas within the Delaware Estuary.

The wetlands within the site are part of the internationally recognized Delaware Bay Wetlands and are also recognized as a Hemispheric Reserve. The project site and surrounding area have been declared an estuary of national significance by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and as one of the "Last Great Places" by The Nature Conservancy. In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recognized a number of wetlands of the Delaware Bayshore focus area as priority wetlands under the Regional Wetlands Concept Plan.

It is imperative that this Delaware Estuary beach and emergent wetland complex be acquired, protected, and managed for fish and wildlife values in perpetuity. Once acquired, the Sea Breeze Project properties will be managed by the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife as part of its Wildlife Management Area system.

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 a land deal that protects some of the Delaware Bayshore Region's last great places.

Sincerely,

Matt Blake
American Littoral Society