



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
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JON S. CORZINE
Governor

LISA P. JACKSON
Commissioner

April 4, 2007

Honorable Anthony R. Bucco
Senator, District 25
75 Bloomfield Avenue, 3rd Floor
Denville, New Jersey 07834

Dear Senator Bucco:

I am writing in response to your January 12, 2007 letter. Thank you for sharing your concerns regarding Lake Hopatcong and the continued funding for the operation of the Lake Hopatcong Commission.

I can assure you that this Administration shares your concern for the health and well being of the state's largest lake. The Governor and I recognize the important economic, recreational and ecological contribution a well-managed Lake Hopatcong provides to the State of New Jersey.

As you are aware, the Department of Environmental Protection (Department) has worked closely with the Commission from the outset to improve and protect the water quality of Lake Hopatcong.

The Department has been and continues working cooperatively with the Commission on many lake management initiatives including:

- The development and approval of a DEP funded phosphorus TMDL which established load reduction targets and implementation strategies.
- The development and approval of a DEP funded Watershed Restoration Plan that identifies specific implementation measures to address lake impairments.
- The implementation of a DEP funded \$844,000 319(h) grant to reduce stormwater runoff and improve water quality in Lake Hopatcong.
- The implementation of a \$745,000 EPA Targeted Watershed Grant to restore the water quality in Lake Hopatcong through various innovative and traditional management practices.

Through these projects and others the Commission has demonstrated its value as the regional coordinating entity for the Lake Hopatcong Watershed. It is primarily for this reason that the Department has taken the position that a stable source of funds to operate the commission is essential to its long term success.

How to establish a stable funding source has been a topic of debate for many years. While the Commission's enabling legislation provides for the mechanism to request an annual appropriation, the result has proven to be anything but stable due to the unpredictability of economic cycles and competing interests.


In reviewing the structure of funding mechanisms for other similar organizations around the country, the Department has determined that the best model to achieve stable funding is a "user fee" program, where the primary users of the resource pay to help maintain the resource as an economic and recreational asset. This model has proved successful for many lake regions including Lake George, New York where the Lake George Commission is funded almost entirely through a special boat registration fee.

The Department, in close partnership with the Commission, has begun the process of working through the details of a "user based" funding program tailored specifically for the Lake Hopatcong Watershed. A program needs to be in place for the start of State Fiscal Year 2009 which begins July 1, 2008. In the interim, we will work with the Commission to assure adequate funding is available to sustain the Commission's operations.

As you know, the Corzine Administration, working with the Legislature, is steadfastly addressing the staggering budget issues facing this state. One of the toughest things to do in that context is to find funds for all the programs that are currently operating. Please be aware that the State Fiscal Year 2008 proposed budget does include a \$400,000 line item for the Lake Hopatcong Commission. The Department acknowledges that this amount is not adequate to fund the Commission for the entire fiscal year and, as stated above, will take the requisite steps to provide the necessary resources for State Fiscal Year 2008 as we put in place the agreed to stable funding program. Your support for a "user fee" based approach is crucial to guarantee the continued success of the Commission and the restoration and protection of Lake Hopatcong.

Again, the Department supports the mission of the Lake Hopatcong Commission and I look forward to working with you and the other elected and appointed officials to protect and enhance the State's environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa P. Jackson", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lisa P. Jackson
Commissioner