

For Release: Immediate
Thursday, July 30, 2009

Contact: [Jason Butkowski](#)
(609) 292-5215

SMITH STATEMENT ON JOINT HEARING ON BARNEGAT BAY AND SHORE ISSUES

LACEY TOWNSHIP – Senator Bob Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, and Chairman of the Senate Environment Committee, issued the following statement today regarding the joint hearing between his panel and the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee on the environmental conditions facing the Barnegat Bay and Little Egg Harbor estuaries and other important issues facing the Jersey Shore:

“New Jersey residents from Cape May to High Point are proud of our pristine Jersey shore and rightly so. The Shore region is the jewel in our State’s tourism crown, with visitors to the State flocking by the thousands to our beautiful beaches and vibrant bays every summer.

“However, the lasting beauty and attraction of the Jersey shore comes at a price, and that price is continued and responsible stewardship by elected leaders and Shore residents who can make a difference.

“Today, we heard about the effects of nonpoint source pollution on the health and vitality of the Barnegat Bay and Little Egg Harbor estuaries, some of the most extensive saltwater marsh ecosystem left on the entire East Coast. Higher levels of phosphorous and nitrogen, caused by pollution runoff, are literally choking the life out of the Barnegat Bay ecosystem, creating an inhospitable habitat for marine life and aquatic plant life that has thrived in the area for generations.

“The dangers to the environmental quality and vitality of the Barnegat Bay and Little Egg Harbor Estuary are not unique to that region. Unless we take a Statewide, comprehensive and coordinated approach to reduce nonpoint source pollution, through development buffers along vulnerable waterways, nitrogen and phosphorous abatement efforts in our waters, and other common-sense pollution controls, we’re going to see the same fate for other inlets and bays around the State.

“Simply put, unless we act, our beautiful bays and inlets will be turned into nothing more than wildlife dead-zones, decimating not only our tourism economy but also the State’s commercial fishing industry.

“Without action to control the impact of nonpoint source pollution in our bays and inlets, efforts to protect and preserve the Shore will be for naught. Efforts to bolster tourism and attract new visitors to the Shore will be for naught. We spoke today about the federal saltwater fishing registry and finding funding for the interpretive centers at Liberty State Park and Island Beach State Park. But unless we reverse course on nonpoint source pollution and actually start to reduce pollution levels in our water, we might as well stop the conversation right here, because it’s going to be game over.

“I remain hopeful that we can reverse years of laissez-faire environmentalism when it comes to Barnegat Bay. The stakes, both ecological and economical, are too great to ignore the data on runoff pollution in the bay. But through comprehensive pollution controls and runoff mitigation efforts, we can preserve these fragile ecosystems for generations to come.”