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GENERAL ASSEMBLY ENVIRONMENT
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STATE HOUSE ANNEX
PO BOX 068
TRENTON NJ 08625-0068

May 9, 2011

Honorable Chris Christie
Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

Honorable Robert Martin
Commissioner of Environmental Protection
401 E. State Street
PO Box 402
Trenton, NJ 08625-0402

Dear Governor Christie and Commissioner Martin:

As the chairs of the Senate Environment and Energy Committee and the General Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee, we are writing respectfully to urge you to preserve and fully staff the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission, an agency that was created by legislation sponsored by Senator Ray Bateman in 1974.

On April 28 the two committees met jointly to take testimony on the status of the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission. We heard the same message over and over -- that the Canal Commission is a model of good government. It protects the water quality of the Delaware and Raritan Canal as well as the viewshed of the Canal. Through the regulatory process the Canal Commission has generated over \$20 million of improvements to be made in the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park.

The developers who are regulated by this land use agency appreciate the role of the Canal Commission in protecting the Canal, which is a tremendous asset that developers routinely use in advertising their properties. The regulated community also greatly appreciates the efficiency with which the Canal Commission processes their permit applications. Moreover, because any move to abolish the Canal Commission would likely not garner sufficient legislative support, there is a real danger that the regulated community would be left in administrative limbo with no agency statutorily authorized to process their permit applications.

Finally and not inconsequentially, the Canal Commission is self-funding through application fees. This important work is performed at no cost to the taxpayers.

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Given these findings, we urge you to allow the Canal Commission to continue its good work. The Canal Commission should be allowed, immediately and without interference by the DEP, to hire a new executive director to replace Ernie Hahn, who is retiring this month. Because it is a very small agency, the Canal Commission should also be allowed immediately to replace other staff who have left in recent months. Any further delay would cause considerable harm to the Commission and, ultimately, to the Canal.

The following members of the two committees concur with the sentiments expressed in this letter:

Robert M. Gordon, Vice Chair
Linda R. Greenstein
Christopher "Kip" Bateman

Reed Gusciora, Vice Chair
Peter J. Barnes III
Dan Benson (substitute)
Pamela R. Lampitt
Charles Mainor

Thank you for considering this urgent plea from the legislative committees with oversight over the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission.

Sincerely yours,

Bob Smith, Chair
Senate Environment and Energy Committee

John F. McKeon, Chair
General Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee