

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY GOVERNOR JIM FLORIO
WETLANDS EVENT
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1991

THE PEOPLE IN WASHINGTON SAY THAT IF YOU JUST CALL A WETLAND SOMETHING ELSE, IT WILL BECOME SOMETHING ELSE.

THE PEOPLE IN WASHINGTON THINK YOU CAN BUILD A HOUSE ON A WETLAND AND SOMEHOW IT WON'T SINK.

THE PEOPLE IN WASHINGTON THINK YOU CAN PAVE OUR WETLANDS AND SOMEHOW NOT POLLUTE YOUR WATER SUPPLY.

BUT THE PEOPLE IN NEW JERSEY KNOW THAT'S ALL NONSENSE.

TWO WEEKS AGO, WE HELD A HEARING IN NEW JERSEY TO LET THE PEOPLE IN WASHINGTON KNOW OUR SHORELINE ISN'T FOR LEASE TO OIL COMPANIES.

NOW, WE'RE TELLING THEM OUR WETLANDS AREN'T FOR SALE TO REAL ESTATE SPECULATORS.

THE CHANGES WASHINGTON IS PROPOSING IN THE WAY WE DEFINE WETLANDS ARE SCIENTIFICALLY UNSOUND AND ECOLOGICALLY RECKLESS.

THEY WOULD BE AN ENVIRONMENTAL NIGHTMARE FOR OUR CLEAN WATER SUPPLY AND AN ECONOMIC DISASTER FOR BUSINESSES AND HOMEOWNERS.

THIS NEW DEFINITION OF WETLANDS SERVES NO ONE WELL.

AND IT WOULD BE ESPECIALLY DEVASTATING TO NEW JERSEY.

UNDER THE PROPOSED CHANGE, 150,000 ACRES OF FRESH WATER WETLANDS -- HALF OF ALL THE WETLANDS IN OUR STATE -- COULD BE OPENED UP FOR REAL ESTATE SPECULATION.

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT PRESERVING OUR WETLANDS, WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT SAVING SNAIL DARTERS.

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT PROTECTING A KEY PART OF OUR ECONOMY.

NEW JERSEY'S WETLANDS SERVE AS A NATURAL PURIFIER FOR OUR WATER SUPPLY. AND CLEAN WATER IS THE LIFEBLOOD FOR SOME OF OUR MOST VIBRANT INDUSTRIES -- INDUSTRIES LIKE PHARMACEUTICALS, CHEMICALS, AND FOOD PROCESSING.

IF WE POISON OUR WATER, WE POISON OUR ECONOMY.

THE PROPOSED CHANGE WOULD ALSO SPELL DISASTER FOR UNSUSPECTING FAMILIES WHO MIGHT BUY HOMES BUILT IN WETLANDS.

ACCORDING TO THE EPA, IT'S OK TO BUILD A CONDO COMPLEX ON A WETLAND AS LONG AS THE AREA DOESN'T FLOOD FOR TWO WEEKS AT A TIME.

IMAGINE THAT. IT'S ALRIGHT IF YOUR BASEMENT FLOODS WITH EVERY HARD RAIN AS LONG AS THE FLOODWATERS RECEDE IN TWO WEEKS.

THAT'S WHAT THESE NEW RULES SAY.

BUT WE SAY THAT'S WRONG. THE PEOPLE OF NEW JERSEY WORK TOO HARD FOR THEIR MONEY TO SINK IT INTO A SINKING HOME.

NO GOOD EVER COMES FROM BAD SCIENCE.

AND THAT'S WHAT THIS NEW DEFINITION IS.

THIS PROPOSAL IS CLEARLY NOT IN KEEPING WITH THE INTENT OF THE FEDERAL CLEAN WATER ACT TO RESTORE AND MAINTAIN THE CHEMICAL, PHYSICAL AND BIOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF THE NATION'S WATERS.

IT'S NOT IN KEEPING WITH NEW JERSEY'S OWN FRESHWATER WETLANDS PROTECTION ACT.

— AND IT POSES A DIRECT AND SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES.

WE VALUE PROGRESS IN NEW JERSEY.

BUT WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR BALANCE.

AND WE KNOW IT'S NOT PROGRESS TO UPSET THAT BALANCE AND DESTROY A CRITICAL AND IRREPLACABLE PART OF OUR ENVIRONMENT.

IN RECENT YEARS, WE HAVE TAKEN SOME SIGNIFICANT STEPS TO SAVE OUR WETLANDS. OUR FRESHWATER WETLANDS PROTECTION ACT IS THE TOUGHEST OF ITS KIND IN THE COUNTRY.

THAT LAW IS THE RESULT OF HARD WORK BY MANY PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE NEW JERSEY FRESHWATER COALITION AND PEOPLE LIKE TOM GILMORE, THE HEAD OF THE NEW JERSEY AUDOBON SOCIETY.

BUT THE CHANGES PROPOSED BY WASHINGTON COULD WIPE OUT ALL OUR PROGRESS.

THAT'S WHY WE STRONGLY OPPOSE THE NEW RULES.

AND TOGETHER, WE CAN WIN.