

Dear [Decision Maker],

As you may know, Governor Corzine's proposed budget includes a 15% cut to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Because of repeated cuts over the last decade, the DEP cannot absorb an additional cut and still continue to protect New Jersey's environment and administer the programs that are so important to our public health, economy, and quality of life.

I am particularly concerned about the recently announced state park closings that will be the result of the proposed cuts. Our parks are integral to the state's economy, bringing in \$3.9 billion in park fees, sales tax, and tourism-related industries, such as hotels and restaurants, each year. They are also important places where families can go to spend time together, exercise, and enjoy the outdoors. Our low- and middle-income families are especially dependent upon these public open spaces because they do not have vacation homes and other access to private facilities that our higher-earning residents enjoy.

Resolving New Jersey's budget crisis by cutting the DEP does not make sense. The DEP is 90% self-sustaining, with only 10% of its budget coming from general state funds. In fact, we will lose important revenues from park fees, permit fees, fines, and federal funding if we make these cuts, meaning even more cuts in the future. This is not a sound strategy for getting the state back on track fiscally.

New Jersey voters have repeatedly approved funding for parks and open spaces, even during difficult fiscal times. Less than six months ago, we approved a \$200 million bond issue to fund the state's open space, farmland, and historic preservation programs, even while denying two other funding requests. Clearly this is a priority for the people of New Jersey. I urge you to honor that priority by voting NO on any budget that includes these cuts.

Sincerely,  
[Name]  
[Address]