



**American Littoral Society • New Jersey Conservation Foundation • New Jersey
Sierra Club • New York/New Jersey Baykeeper • Pinelands Preservation
Alliance • Surfrider Foundation Jersey Shore Chapter**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Helen Henderson, American Littoral Society, 732-575-5701

Debbie Mans, NY/NJ Baykeeper, 732-888-9870 ext 2

Emile DeVito, New Jersey Conservation Foundation, 908-432-3419

**Coastal, Environmental, and Land Conservation Groups Object to Public
Beach Giveaway Scheme**

***Groups argue the beach belongs to the Public; not private development
interests***

(Seaside Heights, NJ)- As beach season approaches, environmental organizations are gearing up for a fight to save their spots on the sand in Seaside Heights. The Borough of Seaside Heights recently held a public hearing to gather input on a proposal involving the expansion of the private Casino Pier development on 1.37 acres of public beach along the boardwalk. The New Jersey Green Acres Program at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) is currently reviewing an application for the “disposal” of the land.

Numerous business interests provided testimony supporting the project but several residents questioned or opposed the deal saying it was bad policy and not a good deal for taxpayers. Further, a group of 6 environmental organizations strongly

opposed the project in a joint public comment letter submitted on April 6th.

"Storms and sea level rise relentlessly take beaches away," said **Emile DeVito, Ph.D., Manager of Science and Stewardship, New Jersey Conservation Foundation**. "In order to maintain limited recreational beach space, the public spends millions of dollars every year to counteract beach loss. Even if additional commercial attractions could stimulate visitation to the Jersey Shore, they should be proposed to be built in stable, resilient places. New attractions should be set well-back from the unstable beachfront, not hovering over the Atlantic Ocean, adding to the huge list of immediate structural liabilities while detracting from passive recreational needs. Green Acres diversion proposals must only be approved when they clearly meet the legal test of enhancing public recreation and open space interests, not because they foster private economic interests".

"At the public hearing for this proposal, there was a lot of testimony implying that this pier development would be the only way to attract more visitors and increase tourism to Seaside Heights," said **Helen Henderson, Atlantic Coast Program Manager, American Littoral Society**. "I don't think anything could be further from the truth. During most of the beach season, neighboring Island Beach State Park (IBSP) is 'full to capacity' and must be closed to beachgoers. IBSP is loved and visited for its natural setting and beach. To imply that the beach in Seaside Heights is not enough to bring people back year after year, and that we need to give away a public beach and allow private development for tourism to be saved in Seaside, is at best a self-serving opinion and at worst disingenuous."

"We have very few places on the Jersey Shore that we can access the ocean and that's what makes Seaside Heights special," said **Jeff Tittel, Director of the New Jersey Sierra Club**. "This diversion will take away part of the beach people have enjoyed for decades. Not only have taxpayers paid for this beach as open space, we pay to maintain it and to replenish it after each storm. Beaches belong to all of us and we all should be able to access them. This diversion is a violation of the public trust and giving our beach away for pennies on the dollar for a profit venture. Beach access is limited in New Jersey and we should be expanding it, not limiting it. They want to place an historic Carousel onto one of the proposed compensation parcels, but there are plenty of other places to do it. Our concern is they are not only taking public land, but this historic site will be washed out during the next storm. It is extremely inappropriate give away our beach that we paid for. The land being replaced with this diversion is a joke. It is not even on a beach, near the ocean, or encompassing the same aesthetic or recreational value. You can't replace beachfront

property—it doesn't exist. It's like trading a brand new Tesla for a 1957 Edsel."

"Public access to the water's edge is a right under the law," **said Debbie Mans, Executive Director, NY/NJ Baykeeper.** "Unfortunately, that right is continually being chipped away by proposals like this one, which seek to privatize our public resources."

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