

November 28, 2008

Governor-Elect Jack Markell
Tatnall Building
William Penn Street
Dover, Delaware 19901

Dear Governor-Elect Markell,

As you settle into your new role, The Nature Conservancy wishes to engage you immediately in our important mission of protecting, enhancing and restoring Delaware's lands and waters to preserve biological diversity. As you know, the biggest threats to Delaware's natural resources include the loss and fragmentation of native habitat, and climate change. As an organization with a nineteen-year history in the state, The Nature Conservancy respectfully requests that you include the following priorities in an environmental agenda as you move forward in governing the First State.

Land Preservation. Over the last decade, more land has been developed in Delaware than preserved. The state has lost 80 percent of native forest since colonial times; 36 percent of productive farmland since the 1950's; and, additional open space to roads, highways and new development. That's why The Nature Conservancy requests that as Governor, you:

- Identify and develop conservation incentives for landowners, counties and state agencies that will result in protection of 30,000 acres over the next five years.
- Restore Delaware's Open Space and Farmland Preservation programs to at least FY2006 levels. Restore \$1 million in funding to the new Forestland Preservation Program. Leverage state funding with applicable federal, non-profit and private land preservation support.
- Champion legislation allowing counties the option for establishing land and water conservation ballot bonding initiatives.
- Address management and stewardship challenges facing Delaware State parks, forests and wildlife areas.

Climate Change. Due to its small size and coastal nature, increasing global temperatures and resulting sea level rises will affect Delaware's ecology and economy more distinctly than most states. In response, The Nature Conservancy is working throughout the northeast to analyze the impacts of climate change, and seek innovative, ecosystem-based strategies that will enable natural areas to cope and adapt. In support of these efforts, The Nature Conservancy requests that as Governor, you:

- Advocate for sound and integrated Delaware Bay coastal and ocean management program, including the creation of a Coastal Resources division in the Department of Environmental Control.
- Develop and adopt a Climate Adaptation Plan that includes an in-depth assessment and mapping of coastal resources and natural habitats.
- Charge the Office of Management and Budget with developing guidelines for state infrastructure spending to reduce risk resulting from climate change impacts.

Greenhouse Gas Reduction. To date, Congress has not had the will to pass greenhouse gas legislation. The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), which includes Delaware, will do just that by selling CO2 allowances to power plants in the nation's first cap-and-trade system. As Delaware moves forward with this ground-breaking initiative, The Nature Conservancy urges that as Governor, you:

- Participate in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative auctions.
- Promote the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's new Greenhouse Gas Reduction Program, and ensure it focuses on large-scale reforestation projects designed to abate CO2 emissions.
- Meet Delaware's renewable energy targets.

On behalf of our members here in Delaware, The Nature Conservancy looks forward to working with you to provide leadership on conserving our lands and waters, as well as planning for the climate change challenges that lie ahead.

Sincerely,

***The Board of Trustees,
Staff and 3,200 members of The Nature Conservancy***