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April 24, 2007

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DEP COMMISSIONER PROMOTES RECYCLING POLICIES DURING COMMEMORATION OF RECYCLING LAW

(07/22) TRENTON - The Garden State remains a national leader in reducing the amount of solid waste it sends to landfills but must do more to reverse sagging municipal recycling rates, Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Lisa P. Jackson said today during ceremonies marking the 20th anniversary of the landmark law that made New Jersey the first state to make recycling mandatory.

"Two decades ago, New Jersey became the first state to require recycling because we were facing a dire shortage of landfill space," she said during ceremonies at the Trenton War Memorial commemorating the Statewide Mandatory Source Separation and Recycling Act of 1987.

"Recycling remains just as relevant today, and has implications for the future of our entire planet," she continued. "Every ton of paper that is recycled spares 17 trees needed to absorb carbon dioxide, the primary greenhouse gas."

Equally important in the battle against global warming, making products from recycled aluminum, paper and glass requires a small fraction of the energy needed to make the same products from raw materials, Commissioner Jackson added.

Although recycling has become a greater challenge, there is no shortage of innovative thinking, added Commissioner Jackson, who recognized (see accompanying list) the efforts of companies, individuals and institutions who are making a difference.

Among those recognized were Valerie Montecalvo of Bayshore Recycling Corp. for her work toward a recycling "mega-mall" in Woodbridge; the Steel Recycling Institute for the industry's initiatives in reducing greenhouse gas emissions through recycling; and Rutgers University for its participation in Recyclemania, a friendly recycling competition among colleges and universities across the U.S.

Commissioner Jackson also awarded a combined construction and operating permit to Converted Organics, which plans to build an in-vessel facility to process food waste into a soil amendment for farming. The facility, to be built at the Bayshore Recycling Corp. site, is the first of its kind in the nation.

"These efforts demonstrate recycling has many economic benefits," Commissioner Jackson said. "But a steady decline in the amount of plastic, paper, glass and other materials the public recycles sends a clear signal that we must explore every legislative, regulatory and economic tool available to meet the challenge of boosting our recycling rates."

Gov. Thomas H. Kean signed the mandatory recycling law at a time when old landfills that lacked proper environmental controls were being shut down in favor of modern landfills and trash incinerators. His successor, Gov. Jim Florio, signed an amendment that set a goal of recycling 50 percent of New Jersey's municipal solid waste by 1995. The foresight of the

former governors was recognized during today's event.

Federal court rulings struck down state solid waste rules that allowed counties to control the flow of trash to their facilities, while funds that helped establish local recycling programs also diminished.

To counter this, DEP is developing policies to spur counties to boost recycling rates and adapt recycling strategies to today's lifestyles.

DEP is requiring counties achieve recycling tonnage targets, promote public participation, and enforce recycling mandates.

Meanwhile, the department's Reinvigorating Recycling Work Group has recommended an action plan that includes development of a new "branded" recycling message; increased enforcement for achieving recycling goals; and development of legislative initiatives to, among other things, reduce packaging and increase recycling of electronics.

DEP's Bureau of Recycling and Planning has also commissioned a survey of state residents to help state and local governments better understand what levels of convenience and other factors would boost public involvement in recycling. Survey results will be released later this year.

For more information on recycling in New Jersey, including county-by-county breakdowns of recycling rates, go to www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/recycling/.

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Commissioner Jackson recognized the following during Tuesday's recycling law commemoration:

The Association of New Jersey Recyclers - For more than 20 years, ANJR has represented the interests of hundreds of local recycling coordinators in New Jersey. Instrumental in the development of the Certified Recycling Professionals curriculum, ANJR has produced a manual for school recycling and is an integral partner in DEP's Reinvigorating Recycling Initiative. The association recently launched a Web-based primer for recycling coordinators.

Converted Organics - DEP's statewide Solid Waste Management Plan notes that achieving a 50-percent recycling rate for municipal solid waste cannot be achieved without recycling a significant portion of the food waste stream, estimated at 1.6 million tons annually. Converted Organics was issued a permit to build and operate its facility at Bayshore Recycling Corp. in Woodbridge. Converted Organics' in-vessel digesting facility is the first of its kind on a large scale in the nation. It will take 500 tons per day of food waste and convert it into a soil amendment for farming.

Hesstech, LLC - Since its inception 10 years ago, Edison-based electronics recycler Hesstech has maintained a policy of not sending toxic materials to landfills or overseas. The company has more than tripled its processing facility, and now utilizes more than 50,000 square feet of processing space. Hesstech is currently partnering with Middlesex County College to educate the student body on the need to properly dispose of their computers, cell phones and other obsolete electronic devices known as e-waste. They ran an e-waste collection day and plan to offer the program at colleges and other educational institutions.

PSEG - As a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency WasteWise Hall-of-Fame member, PSEG has reduced waste dramatically since forming its Resource Recovery Group in 1993. PSEG has always been a premier member of the New Jersey WasteWise Business Network and is a member of DEP's Reinvigorating Recycling initiative. This year, the company will expand its environmental education program by having employees serve as mentors at grant recipient schools.

Steel Recycling Institute - Steel is the most recycled material in North America, surpassing the tonnage of recycled paper, plastic, aluminum and glass combined. The Steel Recycling Institute is dedicated to lessening the environmental impact of steel production. It recently announced the results of a program to decrease energy used at steel mills and reduce by 28 percent greenhouse gas emissions per ton of steel produced. The institute has also developed a national environmental curriculum to educate the next generation in environmental stewardship.

Rutgers University - Rutgers finished in first place overall in this year's RecycleMania, a nationwide recycling competition held on more than 200 college campuses. Rutgers recycled 50 percent more than the next finisher. The university was tops in the food-service recycling category and took second place in the collection of bottles and cans. This year, participating colleges and universities diverted 41 million pounds of garbage from landfills during an eight-week period. Also representing New Jersey were Drew University, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Georgian Court University, Monmouth University, Montclair State University, Princeton University and Rowan University.

Valerie Montecalvo of Bayshore Recycling Corp. - Montecalvo started Bayshore Recycling Corporation in Woodbridge in 1995. Since that time, she has developed the company to include the Converted Organics facility; another in-vessel composting facility there is about to begin the DEP permitting process. Recycling of tires and other materials are also planned for the site.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2 - EPA's regional office in New York City has assisted New Jersey's Reinvigorating Recycling initiative by dedicating the services of its WasteWise contractors to provide technical assistance to promote and refine recycling practices for businesses. Using the NJ WasteWise Business Network as a forum, technical assistance will be offered to businesses interactively through workshops.

Zozzaro Industries - Zozzaro Industries is a 65-year-old company and recycling pioneer in New Jersey. In a single shift, the Clifton facility generates more products per square foot than any other recycling plant in the country. They are already the single largest paper processor in the state, managing the paper marketing responsibilities for more than 100 New Jersey counties and municipalities. The company recently invested millions of dollars to acquire and update a facility in Carteret as part of a managed regional growth strategy aimed at doubling current production capacity.