



MEDIA RELEASE

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CONTACT

Ed DiFiglia, Program Manager,
New Jersey Future
609-393-0008 ext. 112

Survey: New Jersey Residents Name Clean Drinking Water as Top Environmental Priority

Results also highlight concern about the condition of water infrastructure and willingness to support investment in upgrades

TRENTON, March 28, 2018 -- Jersey Water Works and New Jersey Future today released the **results of a survey of 1,175 New Jersey residents** conducted in November 2017 that indicated that New Jersey residents believe securing clean, safe drinking water should be the top environmental priority for the new governor and Legislature. Among the respondents, 40 percent rated "protecting our drinking water" as their main environmental concern.

"The Flint water crisis, and the discovery of lead in the drinking-water in many schools and homes here in New Jersey, have combined to move the issue of clean drinking water to the top of the list of people's environmental priorities," said Mark Mauriello, the former commissioner of the state Department of Environmental Protection and a co-chair of the Jersey Water Works Steering Committee. "Every family wants reassurance that this essential resource is safe to drink."

The survey results also revealed New Jersey residents' interest in additional investments in water infrastructure. "Residents support increased investments in fixing leaky pipes and other water infrastructure, with 90 percent saying that it's either important or a top priority," said Peter Kasabach, executive director of New Jersey Future and a member of the Jersey Water Works Steering Committee. "Residents understand that water infrastructure is not only linked to human health and the environment, but is also a means for economic growth and job creation."

Results from the survey found a lack of familiarity of water infrastructure issues among New Jersey residents. Fewer than one in 10 New Jerseyans said they were "very knowledgeable" about **combined-sewer overflows**, stormwater runoff, **green infrastructure** or stormwater utilities. When respondents were given definitions of these terms, they recognized the problems and indicated support for addressing them.

"The lack of awareness around drinking water systems speaks to the need for a sustained education and outreach effort," said Shoshanna Page, co-chair of the Jersey Water Works Education and Outreach Committee and project specialist/fellow for the John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy at Thomas Edison State University. "The survey showed that once people understand the issues more clearly, they are more willing to support investments that improve water, wastewater and stormwater systems. We need to do more to make sure that everyone understands the state of the systems, and what's being done to improve them."

"The goal of this survey was to get a baseline of what New Jerseyans know and don't know about the state of our water systems, what their concerns are, and what is most important to them," said Jane Kenny, former administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Region 2 and a co-

chair of the Jersey Water Works Steering Committee. "Jersey Water Works members will use these results to refine the collaborative's education and outreach efforts, and we will issue the survey again to see if we have moved the needle on residents' awareness of these critical issues."

New Jersey Future will use the survey results to help bring additional awareness to New Jersey's water infrastructure needs and to inform its work in CSO communities.

Download the survey report



About New Jersey Future

Founded in 1987, **New Jersey Future** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that promotes sensible growth, redevelopment and infrastructure investments to foster vibrant cities and towns, protect natural lands and waterways, enhance transportation choices, provide access to safe, affordable and aging-friendly neighborhoods and fuel a strong economy. The organization does this through original research, innovative policy development, coalition-building, advocacy, and hands-on strategic assistance.



About Jersey Water Works

Jersey Water Works is a collaborative effort of **many diverse organizations and individuals** who embrace the common purpose of transforming New Jersey's inadequate water infrastructure by investing in sustainable, cost-effective solutions that provide communities with clean water and waterways; healthier, safer neighborhoods; local jobs; flood and climate resilience; and economic growth. **New Jersey Future** facilitates the work of the collaborative.