

Light pollution

Human Health Risk

Ecological Risk L

Socioeconomic Risk M - L

Concerns relate to vehicle safety (glare), energy efficiency, privacy, and aesthetics. Communications towers and other tall structures that are illuminated at night for aviation safety pose a threat to New Jersey birds.

What's at risk?

The proliferation of nighttime lighting has dramatically decreased the number of stars visible in New Jersey. While there are no health or ecological impacts that can be directly attributed to light pollution, the night sky seems to resonate deeply with people statewide. New Jersey bird populations statewide are at risk from collisions with towers, and regional biodiversity may be affected as migrating birds change flight patterns in relation to towers.

What are the ecological impacts in New Jersey?

Birds in flight can become disoriented near the light source and collide with the tower itself. Nationally, an estimated one million to five million birds are killed annually in collisions with towers. Lighted towers also affect migratory patterns, which could affect regional biodiversity. A number of studies outside the state have documented birds altering their flyways relative to lighted towers. More research is needed in order to determine whether light towers pose significant risks in New Jersey, but any existing impacts are likely to worsen as more and taller towers are constructed.

What are the socioeconomic impacts in New Jersey?

Economic costs, while impossible to quantify, would have to include the wasted energy used to produce unwanted light. The aesthetic impact of light pollution is not trivial, as evidenced by the growing number of night sky activists. There are likely some degree of aesthetic impacts and maintenance costs associated with the deaths of birds near light towers, but these are relatively insignificant.

What's being done?

At least one New Jersey community, Eatontown, in Monmouth County, has passed an ordinance declaring misdirected or unnecessary light to be a public nuisance. In 1997, the New Jersey Light Pollution Study Commission issued recommendations for reducing unwanted light on the basis of safety, privacy, efficiency, and preservation of the night sky. Widespread concern about the degradation of the natural nighttime environment has resulted in the growth of international advocacy for the control of inappropriate outdoor lighting.