

The New Jersey SUSTAINABLE STATE INSTITUTE

Towards a Sustainable Future for New Jersey



January 2002

The Challenge

New Jersey faces the critical challenge of ensuring that future generations will have a State that is environmentally healthy, economically efficient and socially just: a Sustainable State. Achieving this complex goal in New Jersey is essential and requires the best available science and data, innovation, careful judgment, and the balancing of diverse interests.

Responding to this challenge, the State of New Jersey has provided seed funding for the newly created New Jersey Sustainable State Institute (NJSSI). The Institute is a cooperative venture of the New Jersey Institute of Technology, New Jersey Future and Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. The culmination of several years of effort by the State of New Jersey, New Jersey Future, and thousands of citizens and organizations, NJSSI inherits the hard work and trust of pioneering individuals whose dedication provided scientifically credible, publicly discussed, and easily understood information about trends impacting New Jersey's capability to achieve sustainability. Indeed, the Institute starts its work with an already existing track record that has been well recognized in the sustainable development field.

The Mission

The New Jersey Sustainable State Institute will help guide New Jersey's pursuit of long-term economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental quality, and the achievement of specific Sustainable State goals. The Institute will undertake a three-fold task to pursue its mission:

- Conduct research and public fact-finding;
- Provide the public with credible and understandable information relating to sustainable development; and
- Work to establish and strengthen institutional mechanisms in the public and private sectors to ensure achievement of the goals and benchmarks for a Sustainable State.

General Program and Functions

Goals, Indicators and Benchmarks. The Institute will be the anchor organization for the New Jersey Sustainable State goals, indicators and benchmarks. Key sustainability goals and indicators have already been established (see *Living with the Future in Mind*, 1999 [www.njfuture.org]*, updated in 2000 [www.state.nj.us/dep/dsr/sustainable-state]* , and the

*Reports obtainable from websites indicated in brackets.

recently issued companion report *Governing with the Future in Mind* [www.state.nj.us/dep]*) and a major function of the Institute will be to continue to review and update the Sustainable State goals and indicators through a public and consultative process.

The Institute will thus be instrumental in developing *targets* or *benchmarks* and possibly *new* goals and indicators and in ensuring that they are widely publicized and understood. The Institute will also facilitate public dialogue with citizens, government, mass media, higher education, and other sectors about the challenges New Jersey faces in becoming a Sustainable State.

Coordination with and support for State Government. The Institute will assist New Jersey's public institutions, and thus the citizens they serve, and private entities in continuing progress toward sustainable development. The Institute will serve as a public policy advisor on sustainability issues. It will receive and act on recommendations for new research and changes in the goals, indicators and benchmarks as contained in the reports cited earlier and their successors. It will act in partnership with

state government to identify and address questions of public concern relating to sustainable development, especially where there is a need to generate and apply scientific or technical information. Policy advice from the Institute will encompass both already available but underutilized win/win solutions to issues and problems, as well as bold innovative proposals for the long-term quality of life.

Research. The Institute will serve as the focal point for identifying and addressing the most pressing information needs of New Jersey to achieve sustainable development. The Institute will develop a priority research agenda for this purpose. Research priorities will be based on an assessment of the information necessary, but not currently available, to help make better decisions leading to a sustainable state. The Institute will mobilize and allocate resources to promote research that addresses priority needs. It will also serve as a clearinghouse to facilitate the identification of scientific and technical expertise and the commissioning of research in fields relating to sustainable development or the Sustainable State goals.

Governance

The Institute will be led by an accomplished Executive Director who is experienced in the areas of sustainable development and performance-based indicator systems, knowledgeable about New Jersey issues, entrepreneurially oriented, and able to work well with diverse interests. The location of the Institute's office will be determined after the Executive Director has been selected.

A Governing Board will provide strategic direction and oversee the operations of the Institute. The Board will reflect a diverse cross-section of New Jersey interests, including NGOs, business, academia, state government and other stakeholders. The members of the Board will be selected to represent a balance of economic, environmental and social issues and interests, and will include some of the people responsible for New Jersey's early success in pursuing a Sustainable State.

For more information, please contact:
The Institute Co-Directors
Clinton Andrews, Rutgers University, Tel. (732) 932-3822 ext. 721 , E-mail: <cja1@rci.rutgers.edu>
Daniel Watts, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Tel. (973) 596-3465,
E-mail: <daniel.j.watts@njit.edu>

