



**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **DEP ACTING COMMISSIONER LATOURETTE DECLARES NEW JERSEY BEACHES READY FOR SUMMER AHEAD OF MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND**

**(21/P17) ASBURY PARK** – The Department of Environmental Protection is working hard to ensure a safe and enjoyable season at the Jersey shore, the backbone of New Jersey’s tourism economy. Following a pre-holiday weekend coastal monitoring flight, DEP Acting Commissioner Shawn LaTourette announced that New Jersey beaches are in good shape and water quality is excellent during the annual State of the Shore event in Asbury Park.

At the “State of the Shore,” Acting Commissioner LaTourette delivered an update on the general condition of New Jersey’s beaches and water quality monitoring and announced that the New Jersey State Parks Vax Pass is now available online. The annual event is sponsored by the New Jersey Sea Grant Consortium, which is made up of academic institutions and other organizations dedicated to coastal research and protection.

“As part of [Governor Murphy’s Operation Jersey Summer](#), DEP has launched ‘[Vax and Visit](#)’ and will be giving a free State Parks Vax Pass to New Jersey residents vaccinated against COVID-19 by July 4, 2021,” LaTourette said. “And, through our [Cooperative Coastal Monitoring Program](#), the DEP helps monitor the safety of our coastal beaches so that our residents and visitors can relax and enjoy the Jersey Shore with peace of mind. So, let’s get outside and have the best Jersey Summer yet.”

The State Parks Vax Pass will allow free access to all of New Jersey’s 51 state parks and forest facilities that charge daily walk-in or parking fees, from Thursday, May 27 through December 31, 2021, including Island Beach State Park. New Jersey residents who receive at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccination by July 4, 2021 can claim their State Parks Vax Pass online at [www.nj.gov/vaxandvisit](http://www.nj.gov/vaxandvisit). The DEP will also provide refunds to residents who already purchased Annual State Park Passes this year and have received at least their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by July 4, 2021. Parks visitors are reminded to maintain social distance and wear face coverings in all indoor state park and forest facilities including park offices, nature centers, bathrooms and at gatehouses.

The [New Jersey Sea Grant Consortium](#) holds the State of the Shore event prior to the start of the Memorial Day weekend, the unofficial start of the summer season, to provide updates on

important coastal issues.

“If the Summer of 2020 proved anything, it was the value of New Jersey’s beaches as a vital recreational resource for the state’s residents,” states the 2021 report, authored by Dr. Jon K. Miller of the Stevens Institute of Technology. “While the economic value of beaches has been quantified previously, the pandemic highlighted the importance of beaches to our social well-being. With so many activities prohibited due to social distancing requirements, spending time visiting New Jersey’s beaches emerged as vital social outlet, which provided immeasurable emotional and psychological benefits. Although there are many hurdles that remain before life gets back to ‘normal,’ the outlook for Summer 2021 is decidedly more positive.”

Going into the holiday weekend, Acting Commissioner LaTourette noted that beaches are in good shape and that water quality is excellent. A February nor’easter caused significant erosion in parts of Ocean and Cape May counties. Shore protection projects prevented damage to homes, businesses and infrastructure. Repairs are underway to ensure public access to affected beaches.

In addition, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in partnership with the DEP, has completed a \$61 million beach renourishment project for northern Monmouth County and a \$25 million beach renourishment project for Absecon Island in Atlantic County. These projects mitigated the impacts of the nor’easter. Favorable weather conditions since then have helped the beaches to recover. They are in good condition entering the beach season.

Acting Commissioner LaTourette also noted that the state’s [Cooperative Coastal Monitoring Program](#) is at work safeguarding water quality and public health. This partnership monitors 192 ocean beaches and 24 bay and river beaches.

Last year, sampling results indicated that New Jersey’s ocean water quality continues to be outstanding, with ocean beach test results within the standard over 99 percent of the time. Advisories and closures are rare, generally occurring after heavy rainstorms that can carry nutrients and bacteria in runoff from pet waste and wildlife such as gulls, geese and other warm-blooded animals into recreational waters. Bay and river beaches that do not have good natural circulation are more likely to experience closures.

Visitors can get up-to-date information on all water sampling results and beach notifications by visiting <https://njbeaches.org/>. The public can use this website to get beach status information (open, under advisory or closed), reports, and fact sheets, as well as a link to the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission website to purchase a Shore to Please license plate. Proceeds from the sale of these plates fund the work of the Cooperative Coastal Monitoring Program.

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