

PRESS RELEASE ANNOUNCEMENT



New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council

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Department of Environmental Conservation Chair Pete Grannis and Secretary of State Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez Announce New Internet-Based Atlas to Monitor Health of State's Resources

ALBANY – (July 23, 2008) – Under the auspices of the New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Pete Grannis and Secretary of State Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez today announced the launch of the New York Ocean and Great Lakes Atlas, which allows the public to incorporate hundreds of data sets of New York State's resources into an internet-based atlas.

Governor David A. Paterson commended the Council for its work in making this new information available. "New York State has always been a leader in protecting the environment," Governor Paterson said. "This valuable new tool will help build on that legacy, improving the ability of government to manage our resources, while also promoting greater environmental democracy."

The atlas is an online mapping program that makes it possible to download data into Google Earth Geographic Information System (GIS) software. Currently, more than 200 data sets that contain information on such resources as storm drains, wetland boundaries, underwater vegetation, park locations, and fisheries are available through the atlas. Eventually, more than 900 datasets will be included. The atlas can be accessed at WWW.NYOGLATLAS.ORG.

The atlas has been created to help advance ecosystem-based management statewide. The philosophy of ecosystem-based management takes into account environmental and human interrelationships. Its goal is to manage human activities in order to create healthy, productive and resilient ecosystems that can deliver the resources people want and need.

DEC Commissioner Pete Grannis, who is chair of the New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council, said: “Whether it's managing the water quality of the Great Lakes or monitoring marine life, every program managed by DEC deals in some way with the space we live in. The DEC relies on geographic data to enhance decision making and strengthen the services we offer, and we look forward to sharing that information with the public.”

New York State Secretary of State Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, whose department provides support for the Council said: “The Atlas provides a long overdue service to all New Yorkers. For the first time, our diverse communities and neighborhoods, our schools, and our citizens at large will have easy access to this invaluable and comprehensive information. This will be a vital tool for our citizens to use in shaping the future of their environments, strengthening public participation in smart growth, environmental justice, and urban revitalization initiatives.”

Sarah Chasis, Ocean Initiative Director for the Natural Resources Defense Council said: “We depend on our ocean and coasts for food, recreation and jobs, but – worldwide – our ocean systems are in a silent state of collapse. New York’s groundbreaking ocean and Great Lakes atlas is a critical step forward in protecting our state’s resources for the future. By allowing easy access to a wide range of data, this atlas will help communities, scientists, and advocates better restore the health of our ocean and Great Lakes.”

The New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council was established in August 2006 and first convened in September 2007. Along with Commissioner Grannis and Secretary of State Cortés-Vázquez, members include: Commissioners of Agriculture and Markets, Patrick Hooker; General Services, John Egan; Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Carol Ash; and Transportation, Astrid Glynn; President and Chief Executive Officer of Empire State Development, Robert Wilmers; Acting President of the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, Robert G. Callender; and Acting Chancellor of the State University of New York, John Clark.

The Council is slated to issue a report to the Governor and State Legislature on November 1, 2008, laying out a long-term agenda to improve the ecosystems of New York State’s Great Lakes and ocean by implementing ecosystem-based management.

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