

# March 2024 Listening Session Summary

**Title:** What's the Interagency Council Working on These Days?

**Date:** Wednesday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**Moderator:**

Nicholas Angarone, PP/AICP, *New Jersey Chief Resilience Officer & Manager, Office of Climate Resilience*, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

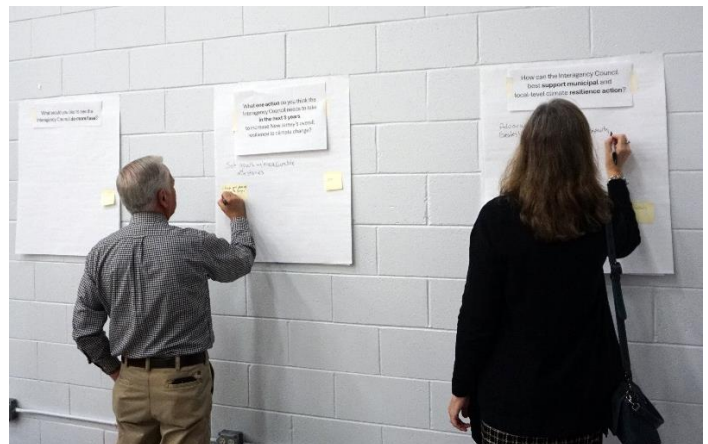
**Panelists:**

Pamela DeLosSantos, *Director, Technical Services Division*, New Jersey Housing & Mortgage Finance Agency  
Teresa Doss, CERP, *Co-Director & Chief Restoration Scientist, Meadowlands Research and Restoration Institute*, New Jersey Sports & Exposition Authority  
Joseph Livingston, *Supervising Engineer, Planning*, New Jersey Turnpike Authority

**Session Overview:**

The [New Jersey Interagency Council on Climate Resilience](#) (Interagency Council) hosted its first listening session during the [2024 NJ Coastal and Climate Resilience Conference](#) which took place from March 12-14 at Monmouth University in West Long Branch. Co-hosted by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the New Jersey Coastal Resilience Collaborative, and organized around the theme of "Adapting to Change - Creating Resilient Communities."

Approximately 160 conference participants representing a diverse array of disciplines and sectors attended the plenary session entitled "What's the Interagency Council Working on These Days?" which provided the audience with a comprehensive understanding of the Interagency Council's core purpose, authority, policy framework, publications, recent accomplishments and current initiatives. Following a moderated panel session, attendees were invited to offer verbal and written feedback with ideas, comments, or concerns related to the Interagency Council's work. A summary of feedback gathered from program attendees is provided below.



**Feedback Summary** (*Themes generated by artificial intelligence and revised by state officials*):

**Q1: What would you like to see state agencies do (more of/less of)?**

- Enhance Environmental Restoration and Stewardship:
  - Expand rewilding, riparian, wetland, and forest restoration programs.
  - Increase funding for ecosystem restoration as a resilience strategy.
- Improve Communication and Public Engagement:
  - Hold regional listening sessions for diverse perspectives.
  - Develop user-friendly communication strategies, especially for environmental justice communities.
- Strengthen Regulatory Enforcement:
  - Enforce existing regulations, such as wetlands and MS4 permits, with reduced reliance on variances.
  - Apply higher scrutiny to permits (e.g., permit-by-rule).
- Increase Collaboration and Funding:
  - Enhance inter-agency communication.
  - Provide more funding opportunities and technical assistance.

**Q2: How can state agencies best support municipal and local-level climate resilience actions?**

- Promote Regional Coordination and Awareness:
  - Encourage cross-municipal coordination for climate initiatives.
  - Address outdated regulations that hinder coastal resilience efforts.
- Provide Resources and Capacity Building:
  - Support towns in implementing climate actions aligned with their master plans
  - Offer technical assistance, expertise, and funding to develop and execute projects
- Expand Funding and Policy Support:
  - Increase grants and identify non-property-tax funding sources.
  - Enable municipal food waste composting and endorse plant-based initiatives.
  - Increase protection of wetlands and riparian area.
- Streamline Processes:
  - Fast-track resilient project approvals.
  - Enhance intra-departmental communication during permitting.

**Q3: What is the one action you believe state agencies should prioritize in the next 5 years to strengthen New Jersey's overall resilience to climate change?**

- Educational Campaigns and Outreach:
  - Launch statewide campaigns to translate climate concepts into tangible local outcomes.
- Expand Funding, Policy, and Infrastructure Improvements:
  - Increase grants.
  - Ban invasive species sales.
  - Require mandatory green infrastructure and develop stronger tree codes.
  - Promote upzoning for dense, walkable communities to preserve green spaces.
- Focus on Strategic Development Decisions:
  - Avoid development in flood-prone areas and identify areas that are no longer appropriate for development.
  - Support managed retreat through transfer of development rights.
- Accelerate Key Projects:
  - Prioritize urgent resilience projects like the Cape May seawall.