



February 22, 2010

James S. Simpson  
Acting Commissioner  
NJ Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 600  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0600

Dear Acting Commissioner Simpson:

The Marine Trades Association of New Jersey (MTA/NJ) is a non-profit trade organization comprised of over 300 marine businesses dedicated to promoting and protecting the recreational boating industry and the waterways in the State of New Jersey. As the voice of the marine trades industry in New Jersey, it is my responsibility to communicate the boating industry's economic viability and demonstrate its substantial role as a part of New Jersey's transportation system, tourism market and quality of life. In doing this, the MTA/NJ membership and I spend a significant amount of time and effort working with State agencies, legislators, and other organizations in finding solutions to industry challenges and identifying opportunities for growth. The MTA/NJ has been working with the NJDOT Office of Maritime Resources (NJDOT/OMR), through our contact Ms. Genevieve Clifton, since the Offices' inception in 1996.

In 2008, the results of a two year effort to quantify the economic impacts of recreational boating and the marine transportation system in the State of New Jersey were unveiled. Survey results indicate that New Jersey boaters spent approximately \$2.1 billion dollars on in-state recreational boating activities. The data captured from this study confirms how recreational boating substantially contributes to the economy and how important the industry is to the state. Boating in New Jersey is serious business and this study clearly demonstrates how much we need to work to protect and promote it, especially during these difficult economic times.

I recognize that the current economic climate has severely impacted all areas of state government. I also realize that many drastic measures and budget cuts have been made and priorities have shifted. However, in your upcoming capacity as Commissioner, it is important that you are keenly aware of the contributions of the marine industry and the efforts of the NJDOT/OMR. OMR is the only State agency supporting marine trades, marine transportation and the maritime industry as a whole. Their visionary approach to advocacy, marine transportation planning and economic development has created new and effective partnerships between the State and industry that have greatly improved boating, and every individual and organization that has traveled or commuted on our waterways. Their efforts are vital to New Jersey's waterways, and are especially critical in this economic environment.

As such, I propose a number of recommendations to ensure the future sustainability and growth of New Jersey's marine transportation infrastructure and marine trades industry:

- **NJDOT/OMR Legislation:** Chapter 429 Title 27:1A-75 states that NJDOT/OMR shall serve as the lead on all maritime industry matters including but not limited to dredging,

dredged technologies and dredging related issues, state and Federal marine transportation systems and Port development. NJDOT/OMR also plays a critical role in the safety and security of New Jersey's waterways. It seems, however, that during the previous administrations, maritime and marine trades have taken a back-seat to pavement and concrete. It is important that New Jersey's waterways receive the attention they deserve as well as that of New Jersey's leadership.

- **I BOAT NJ Program:** It is imperative that no additional funding is removed from the I BOAT NJ Program and that any alternative source of funding does not limit Program implementation. The I BOAT NJ Program is fully funded through vessel registration fees as codified in N.J.A.C. 16:63.
- **State Channel Dredging Program:** My understanding is that the current arrangement between NJDOT and NJDEP for dredging contracting is not working. I cannot seem to get appropriate answers as to why, if NJDOT/OMR has the funding and the knowledge to run the program, state channel dredging is not taking place. Almost every state channel in New Jersey is in need of dredging to take it to authorized, if not an adequate, depth.
  - I strongly recommend that NJDOT/OMR be given the resources and man-power to fully assume the duties related to the State Channel Dredging Program, including contracting and Aides to Navigation. The MTA/NJ sees this function as not much different than roadway construction, maintenance and signage. NJDOT/OMR has proven themselves able to efficiently and effectively manage programs, handle challenges, plan, maximize dollars and prioritize programmatic needs.
  - The NJDOT/OMR is responsible for dredged material management. Tideland Resource Council fees charged to those who "excavate" material from tidally flowed State lands do not currently distinguish between dredging for the purpose of profit/sale of the material or dredging for navigation purposes. We would like the NJDOT and the Tidelands Council to consider the possibility of creating a distinction for the purpose of utilizing fees obtained from navigational dredging and the attendant material management, back into dredging and dredged material management projects. This might allow NJDOT a funding source in order to do a better job of keeping waterways open and fully useable to the taxpayer.

There has never been a more important time for NJDOT to support this segment of the Department. With increasing demand for water access, loss of marinas and marine businesses and the growing list of the challenges facing New Jersey's waterways and all the people, businesses and families that depend on them. New Jersey cannot afford to lose something that we can never rebuild.

New Jersey's transportation challenges are enormous and I am sure that you are busy adjusting to the demands of being a new Commissioner. In a few weeks I will contact your staff to set up a time to formally introduce the MTA/NJ, and myself, and to discuss these recommendations. In the meantime, please call 732-292-1051 if you have any questions or would like any additional information.

Sincerely,

Melissa Danko  
Executive Director

- c. Governor Chris Christie  
Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno  
Genevieve Boehm Clifton, Acting Manager, Office of Maritime Resources