

## Chris Christie job growth plan draft accepted by NJ planners

**TRENTON** — Gov. Chris Christie's blueprint for New Jersey economic and building growth picked up steam Monday when state planners accepted his administration's draft State Strategic Job Growth Plan, though critics panned the document for what they said were weak protections of the state's natural resources.

The action taken at the meeting of the State Planning Commission is part of a lengthy process to adopt a final plan.

The Republican governor rolled out the draft plan Oct. 19, saying it was a sorely needed update on the 2001 state plan. Similar documents have been drawn up dating back 25 years.

Lucy Vandenberg of PlanSmart NJ, a group that advocates economic growth through planning, said Christie's attempt looks good. She said previous tries at mapping development and how state agencies should guide the process "never truly materialized," and added that local officials "never had a clear path" to help make building decisions.

But Wilma Frey, a senior policy manager at the New Jersey Conservation Foundation,

said her group has "serious concerns about the draft plan," citing possibly reduced policing of environmental regulations.

Jeff Tittel, the director of the New Jersey Sierra Club, said "growth trumps all other considerations" in the proposal, and Frey said the Department of Environmental Protection and other state agencies "should not be pushed into a corner to not enforce their laws and regulations."

DEP Commissioner Bob Martin, who has a seat on the State Planning Commission, said that would not happen.

"There's no intention at all" of weakening the DEP, said Martin, who added, "Economic growth is extremely important and preserving natural resources is also extremely important."

David Pringle of the New Jersey Environmental Federation asked the commissioners to consider six recommendations from various groups for revising Christie's plan. The groups largely

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want closer compliance to the 1985 State Planning Act, which has a requirement to “protect the natural resources and qualities of the state.”

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