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Statement on Petty's Island

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I am so sick of the politicians in this state talking about the importance of preserving open space. It's thrown at us all the time in speeches, in local and statewide ballots, in legal settlements. Protect open space, we're told, because it is the single best strategy to protect our drinking water supply, to reduce the devastation from floods, to help clean up the streams running through our communities and to give our children a place to play.

And yet, at Petty's Island, where a private landowner wants to clean up and restore 400 acres of open space and give it along with a multi million-dollar endowment to the citizens of NJ, those same politicians refused it.

Instead of accepting Petty's Island, local officials, with the blessing of the Governor and DEP's highest ranking officials are looking to abuse their power of eminent domain and take this land from its owner in order to give it to a private developer.

How our politicians handle this issue, this offering, should be an eye opener for all citizens and voters.

If your legislators, congressman, senator, and governor tell you they care about your environment and yet take no steps to protect Petty's Island, then it's time to closely scrutinize what they are telling you.

Petty's Island is beautiful, lush, green, vibrant and alive. It can become an "Eden" for everyone, rich or poor, to enjoy to its fullest. The developer's plan allows the general public access only to a narrow path around the perimeter. The private golf course and \$500 thousand dollar homes will keep all but a wealthy few from the island.

Yes, portions of Petty's Island are contaminated. But the property owner is legally obligated to clean them up and make them safe.

If the entire island becomes sprawl development, like the developer proposes - with 1,000 house, a hotel conference center, roads, parking lots and a golf course, then the entire island will become an ongoing and permanent pollution source taking from our environment and communities and polluting the Delaware River.

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That's right, if our politicians do not act quickly and decisively to preserve Petty's Island in its entirety, they are endorsing the clean up of the industrial pollution of the past only to replace it with polluted runoff from pesticides and fertilizers used on the golf course and manicured lawns and oil, gas and antifreeze from the estimated 2500 vehicles that will come and go from the Island daily.

Also, if we develop it, we will have knowingly put people in harms way of flooding and catastrophe. Petty's Island is in the middle of the Delaware River. Nearly the entire island is in the 100-year floodplain.

The good people of New Orleans, as well as all Americans, are paying a huge price for putting people in harms way. New Orleans is a prime example of what happens when you ignore the protection of wetlands and the floodplain.

Any politician that does not work to preserve Petty's Island is going to allow 3000 people to live and work on an island in the middle of a river. They must believe that the horror that has devastated our Gulf Coast could never happen in New Jersey. They are wrong!

I am pleased to be here with Jim and Rhudy, two politicians that support to preservation of Petty's Island and understand the value it will have on the environment, the Delaware River and the residents of South Jersey.

It is not okay that so many politicians have endorsed the destruction of Petty's Island. It is not ok that so many politician been sitting on the fence on this issue.

is not here to support e do not endorse these candidates, but we support them on this very important environmental issue.

Petty's Island if protected and restored will help cleanse our drinking water, clean up water pollution, contribute to ecotourism and the economy of the region, provide learning to our children, and ecological beauty to our community.

Many large tracts of open space are being protected out in the predominantly wealthy suburbs of our state. Petty's Island is located in some of the most densely populated and poor communities in our state. I ask you, could it be that the value of open space is different when it's in a wealthy community versus a poor community?

(which when it occurs we will all have to pay to clean up and make amends) and we will have degraded the health of our river and environment in a reach of the river that is already suffering and can't afford it.

That same private developer will also receive 200 million dollars of zero and low interest loans and other state-funded infrastructure projects all from New Jersey's taxpayers.

They are legally require to clean it up, butNot only are they legally required to do that, but also they have willingly agreed to this in writing. Isn't that how we want businesses in America to operate?