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Assemblyman 9th District

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March 31, 2010

Hon. David A. Paterson, Governor
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Paterson,

I am writing to follow up on our recent conversation during your visit to the Assembly Minority conference on March 16th, regarding the devastation caused to so many Long Island Communities by the March 14th nor' eastern storm. The Village of Asharoken was particularly hard hit and Asharoken Avenue, which is the sole access road for 2,000 residents living on the Eaton's Neck Peninsula, was washed out and many of the protective sand dunes have been destroyed. Unfortunately yet another nor' eastern storm hit on Tuesday March 30th, and caused even more damage to Asharoken Avenue and the protective sand dunes.

As a result of your declaration of emergency, the Village of Asharoken may receive Federal funds to assist in rebuilding the sole access road. However, a multi-year feasibility study conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has recommended that over 500,000 cubic yards of sand be used to rebuild Asharoken's beaches. A project of this scope will have to include controlled dredging of Long Island Sound; the USACE has plans to dredge just off Asharoken Beach's depleted shoreline in order to protect the beachfront.

Mayor Patricia Irving and the many thousands of residents in this area need the state Department of Environmental Conservation to exempt Asharoken from the current ban on dredging in the Sound in order to move ahead with this urgent and publicly supported project. It is unconscionable that New York State has a policy that allows South Shore beaches to be replenished by reclaiming the sand through dredging, and the North Shore is prohibited from utilizing the practice. While I understand that there is a difference in the ecosystem of the North Shore compared to the South Shore. I find it hard to believe that a reasonable compromise cannot be found using targeted dredging that would reclaim sand originally part of the beach front. This policy of discrimination must be changed and the DEC must foster a better working relationship with the Army Corps of Engineers on a case by case to minimize the environmental impact. The taxpayers of Asharoken deserve the same cost saving benefits through dredging that taxpayers on the South Shore of Long Island receive. I urge you to expedite this process so that the families of Asharoken and Eaton's Neck receive the assistance they need and prevent further erosion along Asharoken Beach.

Sincerely,

Andrew P. Raia
Member of Assembly

Cc: Pete Grannis, Commissioner NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
Peter Scully, Regional Director NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
Patricia Irving, Mayor of Asharoken