

**1997 PEER Survey of the New Jersey
Department of Environmental Protection
Sample Responses to the Question:**

*"In your opinion, what is the biggest problem
facing New Jersey DEP?"*

1. Governor Whitman's Anti-Environment/Pro-Industry Policies

"Governor Whitman is big money and big business. She has destroyed this Department!!!"

"Gov. Whitman and her anti-DEP agenda. If she is reelected, as a lame duck governor, she will be free to complete her dismantling of the DEP and it's programs."

- DEP administrator

"An Administration that is hostile to public employees in general, and appropriate regulation of business and industry in particular."

"The governor cutting our budget by one third in three years. The governor's people rewriting regulations for enforcement that will make 'enforcement' an oxymoron."

"The forces within the governors office trying to deregulate while pretending to regulate. New Jersey is the most industrialized, urbanized, densely populated state. The natural resources need to be preserved."

"An anti-environment governor."

"Governor Whitman, and her systemic weakening of virtually all DEP programs and policies. According to her, NJ is definitely 'open for business.' Housing, agriculture and chemical industries now dictate environmental policy and enforcement at NJ DEP!"

"Christine Todd Whitman and the now less regulated big businesses putting payola in her back pocket, therefore serving the needs of her friends, family, and business endeavors."

"...a Governor who cares more for business than the environment. She's out of touch."

"The fact that many of the higher ups in the management are politically appointed. Since they are put in by the current governor they are loyal to the governor and make decisions that the governor will approve with no consideration of the environment."

"Republican-lead government whose biggest concerns are business, money, greed, and tax breaks for the rich and who are least concerned about the environment."

"Political influence and budget cuts. Many decisions are based on Whitman's politics rather than sound, scientific data. Budget cuts have further hindered DEP in protecting the environment, perhaps by political design."

- DEP administrator

"Bureaucratic inertia, political influence of corporate interests and an administration that is anti-environment and anti-public worker."

"Under Whitman's regime DEP has adopted a kinder gentler approach to the industry regarding environmental enforcement, as a result DEP is at a all time low."

2. Failure to Enforce Environmental Laws at Expense of Public Health and Environment

"The changes that have occurred within the past three years, with regard to environmental laws and regulations will have a devastating effect on human health and the environment within the next 10-20 years. For example, asphalt caps (non-permanent remedies) are being placed on almost every hazardous waste site, without any regard to the long-term consequences. The regulated community and our elected officials have changed these laws so that it is the least costly alternative that always becomes the selected remedy."

"Regulations are being written by industry! There is little enforcement of permit violations. NJPDES permits have 'no teeth' anymore - polluters get what they want. So, of course, compliance is up, as management is so fond of saying."

"Gov. Whitman caters to industry. Environmental rules are changed to protect industry. Currently DEP is attempting to adopt a 'free period' regulation, whereby industry has a specific time period to correct infractions of the current regs. Some instances, they have 30 days to correct a problem before it becomes a violation. So for 29 days, they can discharge, etc. without being penalized."

- DEP administrator

"Department is corrupt and too political to do what it was set up to do. Not enough room to go into details - Department just exists but accomplishes nothing!"

"The present administration and their 'do nothing policies. Also, the health and welfare of everyone living in New Jersey."

- DEP administrator

"We often bend over backwards to find creative ways to avoid penalizing people. While I believe our new 'compliance assistance' approach is wonderful, I also think we have backed off too much with our enforcement activities due to the governor and her pro-business philosophy."

"Lack of enforcement action. There are a lot of activities being conducted at sites we are not observing. We are discouraged to go out in the field to visit sites. Stay in office and do paperwork. It's the chicken/henhouse - fox concept."

"NJ DEP has not seriously enforced environmental laws in over 5 years. This message is widespread in the state, so it is difficult to be serious about enforcing laws and requiring remediation. We need to 'stick to our guns.'"

"We have been reorganized to be more efficient at issuing permits rather than protecting the environment. There is no, to little, enforcement of current laws."

"Trees are cut unlawfully, water is polluted, and wildlife left unprotected."

- DEP supervisor

"It is clearly not wise to challenge industry under the Whitman Administration and Republican legislatures. Hazardous waste laws being passed have no teeth for enforcement."

"Campaign contributors within the regulated community have too strong of an influence on the Governor's office. Example: Fluid Packing, Inc. in Lakewood, NJ plead guilty to criminal charges of dumping toxic chemicals in wetlands, the Governor's office is putting pressure on DEP to lower the administrative penalties (no signed memos, of course)."

"No enforcement. Some cleanup & remediation decisions are made based on political pressure. The Department caters to industry. Rules are 'modified' for certain politically motivated projects under the excuse that we must use 'common sense.'"

"Gov. Whitman. Her proclamation of a kinder and friendlier DEP has resulted in lack of enforcement of environmental rules and regulations. She has also cut back the work week (40 hours to 35 hours) and also layoffs occurred. The regulated community has taken advantage of this and cleanup work in this state has slowed down immensely."

- DEP administrator

"Thirty percent staff cut by Whitman. Governor and commissioner have policy of 'co-operation' with the regulated community, instead of enforcement of environmental laws and regulations by fines and penalties. Regulated community has too much influence in DEP policies and drafting regulations. Voluntary hazardous site cleanup is unworkable -- no enforcement mechanism. No real penalties for delaying cleanups even under administrative consent orders."

"Whitman's failure to implement policies/regulations based on 'science' due to political ramifications."

"Special interests and willingness to compromise."

"Lack of oversight, inspections, and investigations."

"Loss or shifting of mission from one that protects the average citizen to one that embraces the lobbying of industrial and corporate concerns. Our clients have shifted away from the child with asthma to being advocates for the Business & Industry Association and like groups."

"Near non-existent law enforcement, and diminishing staff levels (while management levels increase). Far too many chiefs, and nearly no Indians."

"(1) Lack of enforcement regarding serious environmental problems. (2) Lack of auditing of any kind with regard to voluntary cleanup/remediation and no penalty for submitting false information to the Department."

"Lack of enforcement for polluters who knowingly pollute or for polluters who fail to comply within a reasonable time-frame. Lack of investigators to visit sites/lack of time to visit my own sites."

"Lack of enforcement. RP's (repeat polluters) know they don't have to do anything. Consequently, DEP goes overboard catering to them, which results in poor quality work or none at all. Then DEP gets blamed for not cleaning up sites, taking too long, etc."

"The level of enforcement of the laws and regulations have dropped to such a point that projects constructed illegally are not required to come into compliance with the law and those under construction are not stopped. This is due to direction from manage level on up and relates to influence from builders and political consideration."

"Near non-existent law enforcement, and diminishing staff levels (while management levels increase). Far too many chiefs, and nearly no Indians."

"Enforcement is at an all time low; fines for offenders, except on really devastating cases, are almost non-existent. The excellent people we have in land use, the ones who are willing to fight for the environment, are transferred to handle the areas of the state which are already built up so as not to be able to cause too much objection to regulated business. The 'business friendly' atmosphere is killing our resources."

3. Poor Management, Leading to Low Morale

"Top heavy bureaucracy - threat, coercion, misuse of discipline process to stifle participation, inquiry or consultation. Major portion of budgets directed into redundant administrative kingdoms, and portions of budgets hidden for pet projects. Waste, lack of innovation, stifled field operations, institutional inefficiency."

"The substantial reduction in resources and layoffs at DEP have resulted in less regulatory oversight and consequently a reduction in overall environmental protection in the state."

"Possible brain-drain due to dedicated employees' being disillusioned by being asked to protect and serve the regulated community rather than the public!!"

"Morale is at an all time low because workers want to do the right thing, not avoid a project due to controversy."

"The morale is low because the governor has reduced the department to a level that makes it as ineffective as possible without sending up visible flags to the public."

"Extremely poor management techniques with decision-making, as well as allowing inefficient workers to continue to collect their pay and others must pick up their workload. Also scientific/technical expertise should prevail over the public's opinion - we have some very intelligent and skilled personnel. Let them feel free to use their education and experience."

"Morale is in the basement due to under staffing (lay off, attrition), high work loads, no promotions, really bad contract thanks to the CWA, lack of consistency in applying the laws and lack of enforcing or applying the laws in the first place. It kind of makes you wonder what the heck your purpose is."

"The morale of employees at DEP is at all time low because of the reduction in work hours (35 hours from 40 hours), lack of directions from upper management and involving many people in the decision-making process."

"All the members of the management team are very much influenced by politics and regulated communities. Truly are making their day to day decisions to please politicians and regulated industries. Employee morale is at rock bottom."

"(1) Lack of technical expertise by those involved in decision-making. New hires are not qualified for their assignments and training/career development is discouraged. The resulting incompetence is tolerated. (2) Apathy and low morale because those who do their jobs well are treated the same as 'dead wood.' (3) Ethical problems - such as someone running an environmental consulting firm from a state office and his co-workers are too scared to blow the whistle."

"Politics and science don't mix. All upper and middle managers are picked by how effectively they play with the regulated community."

"Top heavy management structure that is now larger than it ever has been in DEP's history. Many of these people are political appointees from this and prior administrations. VERY WELL PAID."

*"Top managers salaries ridiculously large in relation to what they actually do! Also, too many perks."-
DEP clerical*

"Policy of current governor. Good employees are being demoralized. These are not the people making the policies."

"The cuts and movement of personnel due to bumping has many people in positions they are unable or unqualified to perform."

"Inside DEP the bureaucracy is laden with unfairness, favoritism, and even nepotism."

"Internal dissent and lack of individual effort to establish personal morale and personal integrity. Individuals make a difference if they try. Management does not exert paramount influence on most decisions. Workers must press their points.

- DEP supervisor

"Lack of scientific management."

"No MBA's in management/commissioners office. DEP not run like a business; civil service rules and inefficient financial managers."

"Upper management does not have a clue on what the day to day functions of the DEP are. Lack of written direction on what our true goals and directions are."

- DEP administrator

"People at top without a clue! What a joke."

"Lack of meaningful training for managers and a lack of leadership from up top."

"Management does not support decisions and knowledge of it's employees. Staff must always defend itself when trying to do things to improve efficiency/ working environment/ quality of project."

"Top heavy administration, unqualified staff at management level."

- DEP administrator

"Too many managers and too many layers of management. The major layoffs of staff in the past three years touched very few managers. Of 3,000 employees, 309 were managers at time of last layoff. More managers have been added since 7/'96, none cut."

"Lack of proper management. Concern seems to be inward, self-oriented, rather than toward the environment or, at least, toward the group. Management is hierarchal, biased, and cares little for the staff."

"Loss of valuable experienced staff due to feeling of futility, stress from lack of staff resources, increased workloads in regulatory programs."

- DEP administrator

"Morale of the management is very poor and this reflects on the morale of the staff."

- DEP administrator

"Clear planned leadership is a big problem."

- DEP administrator

"Poor morale, which is leading staff to take a who gives-a-shit-anyway approach to their job performance."

"Cuts in funding and staff have led to low morale and inadequate enforcement. Large problems such as pollution and containments are not being recognized or studied as they should be."

"Morale, the lack of leadership, and the lack of management to motivate its employees."

"Employee morale, career employees are being demoted such as my self with layoffs- THEN- employees who were laid off are being rehired. No incentive, since your pay check is less and there is no chance for promotion or advancement."

"Lack of promotions followed by morale."

"Morale! No incentive for a job well done. Lack of good middle management. Far too many chiefs and not enough Indians."

"Organizationally, conditions are horrendous and thus, morale is always low."

"Constant threat of layoffs have destroyed morale at DEP. 'Bean counting' and inappropriate complaint taking by supervisor undermined the inspectors direction or purpose. Speaking out against actions recommended by supervisor causes problems with inspectors performing the investigations."

"Cuts in positions, hours, pay have drastically affected the quality and quantity of work output; morale is at an all time low."

- DEP administrator

"The department has a crisis of conscience currently. Agency morale is low because staff does not believe that the agency any longer protects the environment, that DEP has become just another subject to the whims of state administration."

"Morale inside the department. There have been no promotions for over a year and more people are leaving the department for greener pastures."

- DEP clerical

"Morale, a lack of direction in dealing with the public and environmental problems. Problems are found but if policies disagree then problems are placed on the back burner (i.e. Camden's water treatment plant). The water from the CCMUA into the Delaware River is cleaner the city current water flow into homes."

"Low morale due to (1) Whitman's slashing of DEP workforce by 30% her first term - uncertainty as to cuts next year if re-elected, (2) antiquated civil service system making promotions near impossible - better odds playing the lottery."

"Morale is at an all time low. Bob Shinn destroyed Burlington, Co. Then moved on to destroy the state."

"The DEP management is promoting 'Quality Initiative' management practices with emphasis on identifying 'stakeholders' who seem more and more to be the regulated community not the citizens of New Jersey. I don't know if Shinn is a good commissioner but I have a feeling he is a puppet for Whitman. This is the general feeling of staff from what I hear."

4. Lack of Funding and Resources

"Inadequate funding."

"Lack of 'field' presence. No lab to do analysis. No radiation response to the four reactors if emergency. No vehicles to go into field. Too many accounting type reports - the 'bean counters' have run away."

"Regulations becoming more lenient and staff being reduced. Resources need to be reallocated to better promote the environment."

"Staff reductions have resulted in environmental work not being done."

- DEP supervisor

"Lack of Human Resources and Technology in the computer area."

- DEP clerical

"Severe cutbacks in personnel AMD virtually no leadership."

"Low morale, continuing budget cuts, staff turnover resulting in the inability to keep trained and talented staff."

- DEP administrator

"Poor financial management. Inexperienced or untrained commissioners. Excessive supervisors (supervisor /4 employees). Micro-management. Strict regulations on small impact projects. Unclear regulations."

"The biggest problem is staffing cuts which have created very low morale."

"The loss of staff and management's lack of resources."

"Staff have been cut to the bones and things are beginning to slip through the cracks."

- DEP administrator

"Disorganization and disruption due to DEP layoff rules and regulations."

"Lack of resources to do a good job. Budget cuts and layoffs."

- DEP administrator

"Securing a stable source of funding for natural resources is a basic problem."

"Funding and manpower to maintain New Jersey state parks is totally insufficient, compromising the health and safety of the public."

- DEP supervisor

"1. Lack of resources- mainly to talented professional people in management.

2. Lack of people to do the actual work."

"Cut backs have impacted the ability of professional staff to enforce regulations and protect the citizens and resources of New Jersey. Without regulations what is going to be available for our future generations."

5. Public Uninformed/ Information Hidden

"Now, the Department ALWAYS decides on the side of the company or regulated party, and then LIES to the public about the environmental consequences. Thus, the public doesn't associate environmental protection with DEP."

"Narrow vision for land use. Public is not informed thoroughly about rules and regulations and their purpose. Resources and tools are not adequate to enforce, perform functions, and to inform the public."

"Lack of communication. People don't seem to know what's happening. People still seem interested in the environment, but they either don't know what goes on here, or, they only hear industry's side."

"The regulated community and members of the general public do not respect the enforcement agents, inspectors, investigators. This has created additional difficulties establishing and finding serious environmental problems in the field."

"Need to be proactive instead of reactive , especially in the area of public safety."

- DEP administrator

6. Fear of Retaliation/Unwillingness to Sign Names

"Good management afraid to voice their opinion to inept political appointees (fear for loss of job)."

"None - fear of discipline."

- DEP administrator

"Political interference by the current administration! which has caused management - for fear of losing job/status. Constant threats from above that if one does not do jobs that are out of title it will cause more layoffs when in fact this administration is already planning more layoffs after election."

"When I refused to [ignore an environmental rule or regulation], I was demoted and transferred...I also received death threats."

"You must be nuts to ask my name. I can't be honest if known to DEP."

- DEP administrator

"Sorry - If this info ever gets out - I'm F'ed. Just because you say it's confidential, doesn't mean it is."