



**Montclair | West Essex | Nutley**

**May 14, 2014**

**CLIMATE CHANGE IS A MAJOR FORCE IN EXACERBATING EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS – HARMING OUR FAMILIES, COMMUNITY & ECONOMY**

## **Save our Planet: Montclair and Essex Leaders speak out about Climate change and demand action from Feds**

Today, local business owners and community leaders gathered for a press conference at the new Montclair Fire Station to talk about the need to combat climate change. The participants laid out action being taken at the local level, and also called for bold federal action. They highlighted the devastating and destructive impacts of climate-fueled extreme weather on our health, safety and economy. And they focused on the need to mitigate future climate impacts.

"Actions at the local level are driving the state, national, and global initiatives, which are necessary for sustainability and resilience - and to prevent the worst aspects of climate disruptions," said Gray Russell, Montclair Sustainability Officer. "We are making progress here in Essex County, but we also need broader political consensus across the country to jump-start bold solutions, build smart infrastructure, and ignite a new, clean tech economy."

While communities are spending billions on resiliency efforts designed to minimize weather events, we need action at the federal level to address the root cause of climate change. Power plants account for 40% of the unlimited carbon pollution in the United States. As we know from the recently released National Climate Assessment, as well as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's fifth report, 97% of scientists agree that strong steps are necessary when it comes to national and international policies that limit carbon pollution. This is the only way to cut carbon pollution in a manner meaningful enough to combat the most dangerous effects of climate change and extreme weather.

"Traditional transportation contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions in New Jersey due to our dense population and the resulting congestion on our community streets and our highways," said Cyndi Steiner, New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition Executive Director. "As we work to provide alternative transportation options, such as mass transit, shuttles, bicycle and pedestrian friendly streets and multi-modal systems that reduce dependency on single occupancy vehicle travel, we are not only reducing these CO2 emissions, we are also enhancing quality of life for New Jerseyans by providing options that reduce travel time and ultimately, the stress associated with daily commuting on congested roadways."

Montclair BID director Luther Flurry agreed. "Montclair customers and, I think, most customers want to spend their money with socially and environmentally conscious businesses," said Flurry, Montclair Center Business Improvement District Executive Director. "Montclair Center is filled with establishments that know fighting climate change is good for business as well as doing good. I hope, one day soon, policy will catch up with the common sense approaches local businesses are already taking."

According to a recent report by the Department of Environmental Protection, 8 of the 10 worst storms in New Jersey history have occurred since 1999, and more events are likely to occur in the coming years. Moreover, 2011 was the wettest year on record. With each passing year, as storms get stronger, more violent and cause more damage – the costs of recovery continue to climb. According to research from Rutgers University, the rise in sea level will approach 16 inches by 2050 and 44 inches by the turn of the century in 2100. The Jersey Shore is predicted to experience floods that today happen only once a century every year or two by the end of century.

“As a developer in Montclair, we are committed to assisting the Township and it's residents in bringing about new approaches to development and transportation that are more energy efficient and environmentally sensitive,” said Brian Stolar, The Pinnacle Companies President and CEO. “We are incorporating LEED planning, solar energy and micro unit efficiency designs in our buildings. We are also working together with the Township of Montclair and the NJBWC to provide alternative transportation initiatives that encourage residents to use mass transit and to facilitate bike and pedestrian options in their daily lives. All of these efforts will help to significantly reduce energy consumption and air pollution in the local area.”

“From hurricanes to heat waves and from droughts to blizzards, extreme weather is harming communities all across America. And climate change is causing these harmful events to increase in both intensity and frequency.” said Brendan Gill, Essex County Freeholder. “We have a moral imperative to act. We simply can't wait any longer to address this problem at a national level. That's why President's Obama's climate action plan is so important for Montclair, as well as every other community throughout Essex County and New Jersey.”

Last June, President Obama announced his historic National Climate Action plan, which includes America's first-ever limits on carbon pollution from power plants. It also calls for new clean energy and energy efficiency investments, along with other strategies to prepare for the effects of climate change. Last September, the Environmental Protection Agency issued a new proposal for carbon pollution from new power plants - which is the first step in the implementation of Obama's plan.

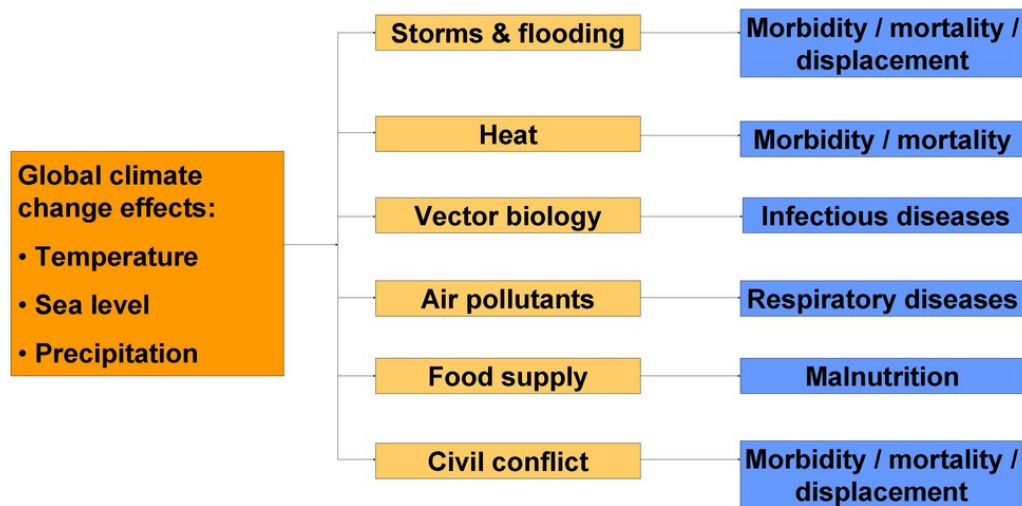
“President Obama has a solid plan to combat climate change, and it's up to all of us at the local level to stand up in support of efforts at the national level,” said Montclair Mayor Robert Jackson. “The accelerating rate of climate change poses the threat of significant impacts on the security, health and economies of cities and nations around the globe. The consensus of climate scientists worldwide is that human activity is by far the largest contributor to climate change. It is our responsibility as community leaders to be good stewards of our planet by doing all we can to help protect our environment.”

Just last week, President Obama announced an additional \$2 billion goal in energy efficiency updates for federal buildings over the next three years. He also announced plans to expand the Energy Department's Solar Instructor Training Network – to support programs at community colleges to help 50,000 workers break into the solar industry by 2020, helping the economy and reducing the causes of climate change.

Climate change is a major force in exacerbating extreme weather events in New Jersey and throughout the nation. Polls consistently show a majority of Americans want climate action immediately. 65% of voters support “the President taking significant steps to address climate change now,” according to a 2013 poll conducted by the League of Conservation Voters. Moreover, recent scientific report from a United Nations panel found that greenhouse gas emissions are reaching catastrophic levels, with 95% certainty that humans are the "dominant cause" of global warming since the 1950s.

Over 2011-2012, SuperStorm Sandy and 24 other extreme weather events caused damage in excess of \$1 billion each -- \$188 billion total – and left more than 1,100 people dead. Sandy was the 2nd costliest hurricane in U.S. history - leaving 131 dead and destroying approximately 380,000 homes. The hurricane first made landfall in the United States in New Jersey – with winds of 80 m.p.h. It created a storm surge that broke the all-time record in New York Harbor. In 2011, both Hurricane Irene and a wind-driven thunderstorm “derecho” wreaked havoc on the region, and then a blizzard hit the state before Halloween. Last Summer, New Jersey endured record heat waves. And, just two weeks ago, extreme rainfall caused flooding to shut down the Montclair-Boonton line – disrupting commutes and impacting local commerce.

## Potential Impacts of Global Climate Change on Human Health



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