



This Earth Day marks an important milestone for the Department of Environmental Protection – its 40th anniversary.

The DEP was created on the first Earth Day, April 22, 1970, by a law signed by then-Governor William T. Cahill. It consolidated existing state environmental agencies under one umbrella, giving one state agency broad jurisdiction over how the environment would be protected and enhanced.

Our 40th anniversary is a fitting time to take a look back on where the DEP has been and where we are going. I am very committed to protecting the environment and natural resources of this beautiful and remarkably diverse state. I am proud and honored to be the Commissioner of this outstanding organization and thank our talented professionals for their dedication.

On that first Earth Day, Governor Cahill stated that “the quality of man's life is dependent upon a delicate ecological balance between natural resources and man's use of them.” He asked every resident “to participate in meaningful activities which would result in a better understanding of the environmental challenges we must face together.”

While times were much different then, the DEP's fundamental mission has remained steadfast: to protect New Jersey's water, air, land, wildlife and abundant natural resources for today and for future generations.

Being the most densely populated state, New Jersey has had its share of environmental challenges. Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, the DEP's mission expanded greatly as New Jersey grappled with toxic-waste cleanups, the closure of old landfills and construction of modern solid waste facilities to replace them, ocean dumping, and industrial pollution.

During this time, New Jersey gained a reputation as a national leader in environmental protection. We made great strides in cleaning up contaminated sites, reducing industrial pollution, building state-of-the art wastewater treatment facilities, and fostering the rebound of wildlife species such as the bald eagle and peregrine falcon, to name a few.

Over the years, however, new laws were passed and regulations adopted, some of which created overlapping layers of bureaucracy. The DEP did not always keep step with the times. We are adapting.

The Site Remediation Reform Act, for example, established a new way of approaching contaminated site cleanups by tapping into the private sector to do much of the work

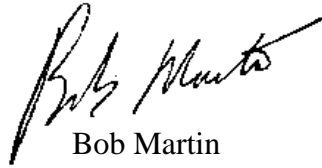
under rigid guidelines. The DEP is also beginning work on cutting through the thicket of regulations that have often placed unnecessary burdens on people.

I understand the urgency of doing this right and without compromising the level of environmental protections the public has come to expect and deserve.

With this 40th anniversary Earth Day, the DEP is working to continue old traditions and start a new era of environmental protection that brings people and common sense back into the calculus of how we approach our mission. Our residents deserve nothing less.

This Earth Day, we remind everyone to keep doing the little things that make their homes, their lives, neighborhoods, and state greener, whether it's saving energy with compact fluorescent bulbs, using reusable shopping bags, practicing back yard composting, or practicing recycling.

While it's great to take a day or even a week to celebrate our environment, keep in mind the adage: Every day is Earth Day. As Governor Cahill pointed out 40 years ago, our quality of life depends on doing the right things. These are words we live by every day at the DEP.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Martin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Bob Martin
Commissioner