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STEVE ADUBATO, host:

Is suburban sprawl endangering our land and water resources? Find out next on CAUCUS NEW JERSEY.

Announcer: Funding for this edition of CAUCUS NEW JERSEY with Steve Adubato has been provided by The Fund For New Jersey, a private foundation focusing on New Jersey public policy issues, and by New Jersey Natural Gas Company, proud to support our community.

ADUBATO: Welcome to another edition of Agenda New Jersey, a special CAUCUS series looking at some of the key issue affecting the quality of life in New Jersey. I'm Steve Adubato. On this program, we'll focus on two of our most precious resources--our land and water. What can be done on the state level to manage growth while protecting our environment? Here in the studio to discuss this and other questions are Janine Bauer, executive director of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign; Amy Goldsmith, state director of the New Jersey Environmental Federation; next Michele Byers, executive director of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation; and finally, Bradley Campbell, the newly appointed commissioner of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

Thank you all for joining us. I want to make it clear that throughout this program you're going to see information on your screen to reach out for the Agenda New Jersey Information, a resource guide is there, very important information. I should make it clear that three of your guests--not you, Commissioner--were involved in writing this report, the Agenda New Jersey report. And let me ask you, Michele, you handle some of the land aspects of it.

Ms. MICHELE S. BYERS (New Jersey Conservation Foundation): Yes.

ADUBATO: Average person watching says, 'Well, what is this land and water stuff? What does this mean to me?' What does it mean to the average consumer, the average person watching?

Ms. BYERS: Well, in New Jersey, you know, we can't get around having--everything we do has an impact on our land and everything we do every day we look out and see land. And for most people, that means being stuck in traffic because of the patterns of the way land is being developed has, you know, really just accelerated development and spread it out into the countryside. And it means a lot of our farms are getting developed and covered with--with houses. So there's no longer the pastoral views that the Garden State has been known for all the time. And most importantly right now with the drought, every day in the paper, there's an article about our water supply shrinking

and that is a direct impact associated, not just from development, but also with the loss of our forest cover. All the--our forest and watershed lands are getting developed and destroyed. And, you know, that--that impact on the land is--h--has a direct impact on, you know, when you turn the faucet and turn your water on, you are getting water that comes from forested water supplies in New Jersey that are being lost.

ADUBATO: We should make it clear that the Agenda New Jersey initiative tries to look at what New Jersey should look like, best case scenario. Commissioner, you've been on the job, as we tape this program, not too long, right?

Mr. BRADLEY M. CAMPBELL (Commissioner, New Jersey Department Of Environmental Protection): That's right. About four weeks.

ADUBATO: What should this state look like in the context of our air--excuse me--our environment, our water, our land? What should we look like?

Mr. CAMPBELL: Well, I think mostly we should--we should be protecting the areas that are essential, but protect our drinking water supplies, protecting the quality of--of the environment we have. And it's--it's important not just from an environmental perspective and a quality-of-life perspective, it's important from an economic perspective. We're only going to be able to have economic growth in this state if we realize that growth depends on clean water, it depends on clean communities and it depends on being more sensible about where we encourage growth and how we manage growth.

ADUBATO: Doesn't growth depend upon transportation? I mean, this is a big part. I mean, people watching will say, 'Yeah, transportation, traffic in New Jersey.' Right? They're synonymous. But what should our transportation look like? And is it possible to get there?

Ms. JANINE G. BAUER (Tri-State Transportation Campaign): What New Jersey needs to do is to invest more in the existing transportation system it has, which is falling apart. Bridges are crumbling and the roads are potholed and also crumbling.

ADUBATO: Is that the exception or the rule?

Ms. BAUER: That's the rule here. We have 834 bridges in New Jersey that are structurally deficient. That actually means they're posted for weight, they're posted for speed. They're dangerous. And where New Jersey is spending its money is not on the existing infrastructure system. It's spending it on new--new lanes, new capacity, new highways that help people live further and further out. And results in this sprawling development and the impact that, for instance, Michele just talked about, every time, you know, you turn on your--turn your key, it relates to air pollution. You turn your tap, it relates to water, whether there's going to be water coming out of

your spigot.

ADUBATO: Do the government--government officials both on the state level--and we appreciate you being here, Commissioner--but also on the local level--do you they get what you're saying right now? Do they get and understand that the New Jersey we all say we want in the future, that this Agenda New Jersey initiative is all about? They say, 'Yeah, you're right. That is what we want. So we're going to help you do that.'

Ms. BAUER: I think the local elected officials do get it. And I think probably some half to three-quarters of them actually care about it, and if they had the tools, they would do something about it. And the other quarter probably figure not in my term of office. It's my job to try to keep taxes low--even though we know that doesn't work--bring in a lot more office development and, you know, somebody else will worry about the traffic. I'll let state DOT worry about the traffic.

ADUBATO: OK. Well, you talked about tools. I'm going to ask Amy, what tools do you think the commissioner might need to do his job as effectively as we would all like him to do on the context of the issues we're talking about? What tools does he need?

Ms. AMY GOLDSMITH (New Jersey Environmental Federation): Well, some of the tools already exist. The problem has been for the last eight years, we haven't been enforcing the laws and the tools that do exist and sort of go back and scurry in through the DEP and look for those things and pull them out. And pull out the--the inventive things.

ADUBATO: So what would you like him to do?

Ms. GOLDSMITH: Well, some things are--you should--when there's a situation, especially in the budget crisis that we're in today, where we should be going after the people who haven't paid their fines and their fees and put that money into the coffers. These are people who have already been found to be in violation of water laws or other kinds of laws. So at least we have some money available to us.

The other big tool is, you know, this--the DEP has a lot of discretion and sometimes it has to use its discretion to say no, to say we can't develop in these lands because we're going to lose the natural resources that we can't afford to lose, that we can't build this highway because the repercussions of doing that. And I think there's discretionary authority and also the commissioner can take more active role and actually write regulations or do executive orders that say we're not going to do this in these places like drinking water buffer zones, like classified...

ADUBATO: What does that mean, drinking--'cause the average person, they don't know what that means, the drinking water buffer zone?

Ms. GOLDSMITH: Well, say you have a reservoir, and around that reservoir you should have a certain amount of land or a certain amount of watershed land, meaning the water that comes into that reservoir should be protected. So you should have limited development or that you shouldn't even allow development in there. You shouldn't extend the sewer lines. As soon as you build the sewer lines in the road, they will go and they will live there, and that pushes more stress. So we should be protecting--the buffer zone means keeping people away from places that should be greatly protected.

ADUBATO: Commissioner, are you prepared to say no where some folks here think you need to?

Mr. CAMPBELL: Absolutely. And strong standards and enforcement are an essential piece in the puzzle, but it's not the only piece. And I think one of the wonderful things about Governor McGreevey's vision for smarter growth is that he recognizes that the--the battle to protect clean water, clean air is something that occurs not just at DEP but at the Transportation Department and our housing areas. And we have a broad inter-agency effort under the governor's smart growth executive order to really address...

ADUBATO: Smart growth...

Mr. CAMPBELL: ...all of those areas.

ADUBATO: Smart growth.

Mr. CAMPBELL: Yeah.

ADUBATO: Define--define for us again--by the way, if you just tuned in, this is our part of our Agenda New Jersey series. We'll be looking at a whole range of different issues throughout the next several months. But not just in terms of where we are today, the question is where do we need to be? What should New Jersey look like? Smart growth--haven't had it to date, Commissioner? And, again, your view of what it really means. The governor's view of what it really means--smart growth.

Mr. CAMPBELL: I think it essentially means making sure that we're smart about the investments we make in our future and how we make decisions. And we're bringing all of the issues to the table at the same time, that where we're encouraging development, we're cur--encouraging it around some of the existing transportation infrastructure. We're looking at where--not just where there's congestion but also where there's underutilized transportation infrastructure, building, you know--creating the incentives and the encouragements to redevelop our inner cities, for example...

ADUBATO: Hm.

Mr. CAMPBELL: ...older--older suburbs the same way. So that's a

major piece of it. Another piece of it is helping communities, giving them the tools they need to retrofit their communities in ways that make them appealing to attract...

ADUBATO: Explain that, retrofit. For instance...

Mr. CAMPBELL: Well, many of our urban areas, for example, and older suburban and urban areas grew up without parks within walking distance for families. Helping--helping them get inner s--open space and parkland and recreation areas near where they live to make those areas more attractive, which in turn will sort of give people more options, options other than simply another set of suburb--subdivisions in the suburbs.

ADUBATO: Let me ask you, Michele, the three of you worked together on this report.

Ms. BYERS: Yes.

ADUBATO: And you come from different perspectives but all looking to do the same thing: Protect, preserve our land, our water. What do you think the average person watching again might misunderstand about this, meaning how about if someone says, 'You know, our land is fine. Our water is fine. Why do you even have to write a report about? What's the issue? What's the problem?' To the average person, not the policy-maker, to the average consumer.

Ms. BYERS: Well, I think, you know--if you--if you t--if you take the view that the state of New Jersey is a business or could be a business, then there would be a business plan and there would be an overall plan as to where the money would be spent, how it would be spent in relationship to what the future of the state would look like, where land would be preserved, where land be set aside for growth and development. And when--when Brad's talking about smart growth, what we're--what we're working on, the assumption is--and everybody should know this in New Jersey--the projections are we're going to have a million more people come into the state in the next 20 years.

ADUBATO: A million more?

Ms. BYERS: Yes, and we're already the most densely populated state in the country, so we're really on the forefront of how to deal with having a big population of people and still at the same time having water and land and farmland and, you know, a beautiful state, which New Jersey still is. So you know, for--for--for someone watching this show, I think one of the things that we all worked very hard on in the report was to say, how do we put together a plan so we can have it all in New Jersey?

ADUBATO: But--but wait a minute. Maybe I'm mistaken here, but I--I thought for about 20 years, there has, in fact, been a New Je--a New Jersey state plan, a plan that has talked about what growth should

look like. You should put more growth and development activities in and around our cities and less and less up in the 287s of the world, you know, that are already too congested. Am I wrong about that?

Ms. BYERS: But, you know, Steve, if you look at the history of New Jersey, there has been a plan since the 1930s. There has been one plan after another for the state. But what we've been missing are all the other pieces. We need a plan, but we also need the budget that is in line with the plan, and we need our permitting and our regulatory...

ADUBATO: For instance...

Ms. BYERS: ...regulatory programs.

ADUBATO: ...make that s--make sense--excuse me. Make sense to the average person saying, 'Wait a minute. What does the budget have to do with the state plan? What could the budget do to be, your words, in line with a plan for smart growth?' What would it do?

Ms. BYERS: Well, take transportation, for instance. That's--that's a huge thing. If we have a state plan that says we're going to rebuild our cities and we're going to protect our environment and make, you know, New Jersey a wonderful place, but yet our ta--transportation budget is geared towards and focused on building new highways, widening highways into our farmlands and our forests, then people will continue to leave the city. We will continue to lose those special places and that plan will never, never work. So...

Ms. GOLDSMITH: Well, the reality is is that people in New Jersey know there's a problem. And the reality is is that 60 percent to 75 percent of New Jerseyans are drinking bottled water. They know there's something wrong here. Why are we all drinking--that's twice the national average. People know that their water is in jeopardy. They know they're stuck on the highway. They know their schools are falling apart. There's no safe place for their children to play or go to school or, you know, enjoy themselves. The workplace is dangerous. People know this. I don't think that there's, like, a learning curve we have to do with the public.

The reality is is that people need to--and government--its responsibility is to take care of issues that require a larger sort of social framework in which to make these decisions. That's government's role, when people can't do that themselves. There's too much coordination, as the commissioner said, that needs to be done. So the people get it. The people have wanted better management. But there's been this chasing after, you know, the ratables in order to keep property taxes down. Or to give you your \$100, you know, in your rebate, but yet in the bigger picture people are willing to give up their \$100 in their rebate if they're going to get cleaner water, better transportation, a better quality of life. Over and over again people have said, 'We're willing to give that money up because we'd get a greater good.' And we should...

ADUBATO: I want to clarify.

Ms. GOLDSMITH: ...expland--expand on that.

ADUBATO: When you say the ratable chase--or people chasing ratables, what you mean is local government officials making a decision to have a developer come in, to cave--have a shopping area built, to have whatever, a McDonald's built in their community, when, in fact, smart growth, Commissioner, may not mean, from a state perspective, that that's the right way to go. Is that a fair assessment?

Mr. CAMPBELL: I think that's an assessment, but I think an important thing to remember is that often the short-term costs and the long-term costs are very different. A lot of communities that encourage growth in the wrong places in order to get short-term income benefits are now finding that in terms of infrastructure, in terms of schools, and in terms of...

ADUBATO: Sewers.

Mr. CAMPBELL: ...sewers, in terms of all those...

Ms. GOLDSMITH: Roads.

ADUBATO: Roads.

Mr. CAMPBELL: ...roads--all those efforts it's costing a lot more over the long-term because they went for those short-term benefits rather than the smarter long-term decisions that were better for the taxpayers as well as better for the environment.

ADUBATO: But, Commissioner, isn't it also fair to say--and, by the way, you just tuned in, this is part of our Agenda New Jersey series. Please reach out. You'll see the Web site there. Log onto our Web site here at CAUCUS and you'll be linked to the Agenda New Jersey initiative. You can get this report and some of the other reports that we're looking at.

But I'm thinking 'Wait a minute.' Local governments depend upon the property tax to pay their bills, largely, right? Well, if local communities are so dependent upon the property tax, saying that smart growth means you shouldn't have development in certain areas is one thing, but if that's where they're getting their money to pay police and fire, something's wrong. So what should the state be doing to actually promote smart growth in local communities who are so dependent upon the property tax?

Ms. BAUER: Well, there needs to be property tax reform so that taxes are regionalized across cities and inner-ring suburbs and even outer-ring suburbs.

ADUBATO: What would that mean?

Ms. BAUER: Well, like, in the Hackensack Meadowlands, what happened is the 13 towns that make up the Hackensack Meadowlands, the Legislature and the public and--and the local mayors came together in about 1970 and said, 'We want to save the Meadowlands. Some development needs to occur. We also need to close the bad landfills that were there,' and so on and so forth. So they regionalized the tax base and what that means is all the taxes that come from economic development project--property, you know, construction of buildings, so on and so forth, and people living there, is regionalized across that district so that one town isn't fighting with the next town and competing to--to get a development that's going to generate a lot of traffic but maybe impact the next town rather than the town that it's in and so on and so forth. And that's the kind of thing that needs to be done. I think, though, that's a big step and while I think we need to start working on that and--and hopefully under this governor New Jersey can start working on that, at least on some kind of a regional basis. There's a lot of things that can be done before we get to sort of biting off a big chunk of property tax reform.

ADUBATO: Real quick, name one.

Ms. BAUER: Well, for instance in the town that I live in, in South Orange, smart growth has meant building a lot more apartments and--and housing near the train station. We now have MidTOWN DIRECT, 30 minutes directly to midtown Manhattan on our train line. Property values have soared. They haven't gone down. We have apartments filled with people who don't even own cars because you don't need to own a car or there's only one. You know, even though there might be two or three people living in the apartment, there's only one car. Less space has to be devoted to, you know, parking, and, you know, which carries water pollution, surface runoff, all kinds of bad things associated with it. That's smart growth.

ADUBATO: I want to be clear. That one decision in your hometown of South Orange, not too far away from where we tape this program in Newark, that one decision to build apartment houses, apartment homes, close to the train station...

Ms. BAUER: Walking distance from the train station.

ADUBATO: ...walking distance--has implications in terms of transportation, water, land use, pollution--Am I missing anything else, Commissioner?

Mr. CAMPBELL: Absolutely.

Ms. GOLDSMITH: Hous--and providing housing.

Ms. BAUER: Air pollution. Air pollution.

ADUBATO: And so fa--air pollution and providing affordable housing.

Ms. BAUER: Exactly.

ADUBATO: Why can't, and why shouldn't we--I mean, what stands in the way of us doing more--more than that, more of that, Commissioner?

Mr. CAMPBELL: I think--I think we need just to do exactly that. And to make sure all agencies are doing that. But there--there are other pieces that need to be addressed. For example, the governor's focus on education is enormously important. Each of us knows a family or a couple who--who love cities, who love urban areas, but decided because of the school system here or there that they needed to move to--to a different area. And the more we address the range of things that affect quality of life, that in--make some of these already-developed areas more appealing, that renew our older suburbs, renew our cities, the smarter we'll be about growth.

ADUBATO: Let's stay on the urban--let's stay on the urban issue for a second because a big part of this smart growth initiative or, in fact, preserving, saving our land and water, seems to me comes down to how we deal with our cities. The issue of brown fields--What exactly is a brown field and what does it have to do with urban redevelopment and how is it connected to saving or preserving our land and water?

Ms. BYERS: Well, I know Brad can speak to that point better than anyone, but I'll say briefly brown fields are contaminated by--most of our lands in our urban areas have contamination historically from historical and industrial uses. Newark was one of the first industrial sites in the whole country, and probably most of the land in Newark has some problem. And so when we go to redevelop that land, we're--put that land into parks, we're dealing with a lot of--of issues in terms of cleanup.

Mr. CAMPBELL: Yeah, I mean, I think that--that is a good description. There u--but they're--they're usually contaminated sites that have been left behind essentially by the old economy, the old industrial economy. And they've really become sources, not just of idleness and--and deterioration in communities, but they've be--really been sources of despair. And what we've found that when you restore--when you renew those sites, either as new centers of economic life, the whole community revives around it. And it's a central component of smart growth is we're actually bringing those sites back to life.

ADUBATO: Where's it been done well? Where's it been done well?

Mr. CAMPBELL: It's been done well--we're beginning to see some--some wonderful projects in some of our older areas, including Newark and Elizabeth and some sites that are coming back to life either as residential centers, in some places parks, and you really see how the entire nature of the community changes around it. In other areas, we

have a lot of work to do. I was...

ADUBATO: Well, what does it take--what does it take to--to--to do more of it? What kinds of incentives would make it more attractive for people to be involved in a smart--smart growth, as you said, smart development, particularly in our cities? What would make it more attractive?

Ms. GOLDSMITH: Well, there's lots of various assorted tax incentives and programs in Economic Development Authority and other agencies, whether it's within the city or outside the city, especially in Newark where there's been so much revitalization. There could be conditions set on what kind of development do you want. You want better sustainable, you know, development? Do you want it cleaner? Or do you want another sludge incinerator, as was, you know, proposed for the Ironbound region...

ADUBATO: The Ironbound section of Newark. Which never happened.

Ms. GOLDSMITH: ...you know, four or five--of Newark. Where--which didn't happen. It was based on environmental justice issues that it was denied because the town--that part of town was so--so much--affected by so many toxic waste sites. So the state could play a role and the towns could play a role in promoting better businesses, cleaner businesses, be--businesses that would be suitable to people who live in the community to work in those facilities so that you don't always have to get in your car to drive to go to those facilities, and to really...

ADUBATO: Absolutely.

Ms. GOLDSMITH: ...match it and partner it with the neighborhood, which often doesn't happen. With a good-paying job and a cleaner job you end up supporting people from sometimes all the way across the state take that job. We should be really matching it to the people who are there.

ADUBATO: Michele, one second, we have about two minutes left. I want to make sure we--we do what we can do here, but I want to remind folks that the Agenda New Jersey initiative--there are no quick fixes here. You got together to write this report. You weren't saying, 'Hey, if we do these things, everything will be fine.' It's a long-term approach, isn't it, Michele?

Ms. BYERS: Absolutely. I mean, I wanted to build on what Amy was saying about economic incentives. Our state does an enormous amount of work to attract businesses that come to it and in one example, I won't name the business, but the state had the opportunity to provide incentives to have this major corporation go in to the city of Newark but instead was willing, because it was afraid, the state was afraid that we would lose this corporation to Pennsylvania, instead gave them incentives to site their facility on a farm field, thus further

draining the resources of Trenton and further adding to the sprawl problem.

ADUBATO: Not with this administration.

Ms. BYERS: With the past administration. So...

ADUBATO: And what--what--when something like that happens--I know we want to talk about the future, but when something like that happens, what message does it send?

Ms. BYERS: I think it sends business as usual. We have a plan but who cares. Let's just go and, you know, give money out so that we keep the business in New Jersey, no matter what the cost. And I think that the--the new smart growth executive order that Governor McGreevey has come out with is one of the single most important orders that I've seen from any governor. It's very clear, it's very strong and it really does direct the state to bring to bear all of its money, its rules, its programs, its policies together towards an outcome.

Ms. GOLDSMITH: And--and it gives supp--and it gives support to the towns who want to do the right thing. The state will then back them up, and that has not always been there in the past.

Ms. BYERS: Right. That's a key piece.

ADUBATO: ...(Unintelligible) one second. Let me ask you this. We have about 30 seconds left. What do you take away from this conversation?

Mr. CAMPBELL: Well, I--what I take away from it is the broad public support and wisdom of moving forward with the governor's agenda on smart growth. That it's not only good for the environment, clean air, clean water, but it's going to be good for our communities and ultimately good for our pocketbooks because we won't be spending later to clean up the damage we do now if we don't plan our growth properly.

ADUBATO: And you'll make sure that the governor gets a tape of this program and he makes it--it's clear to him that not only are people--are supportive of what he's doing, but the smart decisions, the smart growth, that sometimes is hard work when you're getting some other pressures, isn't it?

Mr. CAMPBELL: It is. It is hard. But he very much has a vision for this and is committed to that vision.

ADUBATO: We'll keep talking off the air. Thank you so much. We appreciate your helping make sense of all this.

Announcer: If you would like more information on this program, or if you'd like to express an opinion, e-mail us at [talkcaucus@aol.com](mailto:talkcaucus@aol.com). And visit us on the World Wide Web at [www.caucusnj.org](http://www.caucusnj.org).

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