

## **The Conference:**

### **Green Meets Green: A Climate for Change**

**Commentary by Conference Chair, Professor Michael R. Edelstein**

The Climate for Change that we enjoy today in the U.S. has been created by the widespread public acceptance that global climate change is no longer a contested issue but a looming reality. The combination of Peak Oil and sky-high fuel costs, the increasing mainstreaming of renewable energy at a time when conventional energy sources are suspect, and the growing success stories associated with efforts at community sustainability against a backdrop of failed communities and land-use, farm and transportation policies have contributed to an emerging consensus.

That Green has indeed met Green is evidenced by the willingness and need of consumers to find new ways to consume, investors new ways to invest and industrialists new ways to produce. It is now “affordable” to build green buildings when even recently it was “prohibitively expensive.” In past years, New Jersey consumers gobbled up renewable energy incentives beyond what was allocated. And corporations are competing with each other to innovate new ways to show “a sustainable bottom line.” External costs are being recognized and lifecycle costs calculated.

But, given the immensity of the transformation required to achieve sustainability, a shift to renewable energy and to right climate ills, how do we best take advantage of this climate of change? No one invested in the rights of future generations wants us to fail, but how do we succeed? It will take more than some technological fixes. It will also take an understanding that climate, energy and peak oil are all facets of the all encompassing sustainability crisis. As a result, much more than superficial change is demanded. This is our chance to move beyond rhetoric to create a sustainable basis for human life in the future. We may not have another.

“The Greening” is no mythical time. Rather, it is real effort to depart conditions that are more and more widely recognized as unsustainable, and therefore insecure, and to find some new more solid basis for a good life. As a result, self interest has been redefined as “a need to change” rather than the more common “need to prevent change.” But the path of change needs to be scripted in a fashion that will be accepted and that will work. Despite the fact that the 1970s were only a dress rehearsal for the dire conditions we face today, we cannot forget the lesson of the 1980s---that the window for sustainable social change can be shut with a turn of politics and public perception and the will of those who benefit from the status quo. We must act now while the iron is hot.

**Keynote One.** The first step is strong leadership. The opening keynote session on Friday morning November 30, to which Governor Corzine and Congressman John Hall have been invited, will establish how, with the federal government stalled on climate action and a sustainable energy transition, the states---currently led by New Jersey---are taking the initiative. We need to look to this leadership both as a model and for the content of the policy and programs that will establish green outcomes.

**Keynote Two.** The second step is to adopt new technologies, and, even more importantly, to rethink our relationship to technology and the earth. Required is no less than a redefinition of the built environment. The Keynote 2 session offers Edward Mazria, a visionary architect who has been both pondering and acting upon these changes for many years. His Architecture 2030 has been ahead of the curve in understanding how buildings are part of our problem and need to become a key element of the solution. Mazria will report on his own research on New Jersey, offering insight into the potential steps needed for success.

**Keynote Three.** This frames the issue of how we will make a fast transformation toward sustainability to meet New Jersey's mandated 20% greenhouse gas reduction by 2020 and the 80% reduction by 2050. The New Jersey State Energy Plan, under revision for this purpose, will be profiled in the third Keynote event by President of the NJ Board of Public Utilities Jeanne M. Fox. A response panel will examine the barriers to achieving climate goals and the adequacy of the policies emerging to implement energy efficiency, renewables, green building and achieving sustainable communities.

**The Green Transition: Explorations in Depth.** The afternoon will conclude with sessions inviting active participation by attendees to explore the deeper challenges and opportunities confronted during the period of transformation. Key questions will include "How do we get from here to there?" "How do we keep the public engaged?" "What barriers exist to sustainable change and how do we surmount them?" "How do we sell green to government and institutions in a time of shortfall budgets?" "How do we foster innovative or sustainable learning?" "How do we use "the greening" to restore livelihood, community, civility and an improved quality of life?" "How do we help green businesses succeed?" Attendees will work in stakeholder groups to provide indepth answers to what is needed for the greening to succeed: local community change, greening the region, creating sustainable organizations, implementing green technological innovations, greening government and institutions, greening corporations, creating viable green professions and businesses and greening the consumer.

Sessions will be organized around key stakeholder groups concerned with "the greening": the public, green service providers, corporations, technological innovators, green change organizers and sustainable community activists, government agencies, municipalities and educators. We will look to these sessions to identify the elements of resistance and the barriers to success, the paths to surmounting these obstacles, the definition for each group of "what's in it for me," the resources and prospects for sustainable change and the agenda for future efforts to achieve "the greening." These conclusions will be reported and posted in the Bradley Center.

**Keynote Four.** After the opening of the GREEN EXPO and the Green Holiday Boutique and a chance to refuel, the fourth and final keynote event of the day will occur. Author and activist Bill McKibben, whose work beginning with *The End of Nature* has chronicled the problem and, moving to his recent work *Deep Economy*, also the solutions. McKibben will talk about the social change needed to achieve sustainability and climate

security. Rather than a scary tale of unwanted and unhappy change, he will tell us how “the greening” will make us happier and improve our quality of life.