

2026 New Jersey Coastal & Climate Resilience Conference

Panel 2 - Innovations in Ecological Restoration Project Implementation in NJ: Examples of Supportive Ecological Restoration Project Programs From Other States and What Can NJ Learn From Them

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Overview

- Permitting reform momentum
- Overview of the 9 Types of Permitting Reform
- New Jersey's Executive Order #5



Why this matters now?

- Momentum to improve the process at the federal and state level is increasing
- We need to be prepared to talk about solutions for restoration
- We need to build trust and do this together



There are Nine Types of Permitting Reform

Across levels of government, political party, and project types (energy, housing, ecological restoration, etc.) we believe any given reform can be sorted into one or more of the following categories:



Shift Culture

Among the most influential and easiest ways for executives to achieve reform, these actions focus on visible leadership and staff empowerment to promote new permitting approaches.

- Strong executive messaging
- Strategic hiring
- Change management and accountability measures



Eliminate Permits/Permitting

Many consider this to be the most extreme form of permitting reform, as this approach involves no longer requiring projects to undergo some or any permitting processes at all.

- Eligible projects need to meet criteria for exemption/exclusion
- Exempt restoration from environmental review (e.g, California)
- Exempt and exclude restoration from dredge and fill regulations (e.g., Colorado)



Support Applicants

These reforms refer to the creation of programs that provide technical assistance and guidance intended to help applicants and consultants navigate the permitting process, submit complete applications, and reduce review timelines.

- Concierge Service for Applicants
- Pre-application meetings
- Educational materials for applicants
- Training for applicants
- Permit Ombudsman
- Applicant/Consultant Certifications





Change Decision-Making Level

Shift approvals and oversight to either higher or lower levels of government or cross-agency teams.



Consolidate or Eliminate Steps

Expedite review timelines by reducing steps deemed unnecessary or redundant in the application and permitting process.



Ensure Meaningful Benefits For Nature and Communities

Ensure compensation/benefits for impacted communities and habitats.



Utilize Data and Technology

Develop and implement digital tools to improve transparency, tracking, and coordination throughout the process.



Build the Permitting Workforce

Ensure agencies have the staffing and skills to efficiently review permits.



Promote Certainty in Permitting Decisions

Reduce delays by setting deadlines and clarifying agency responsibilities, while improving the appeals process.

Recap – What can NJ learn from other states?

- **California** - Statutory Exemption for Restoration Projects and Cutting Green Tape
- **Colorado** - exemptions and exclusions for voluntary restoration projects to the state's dredge and fill law
- **Connecticut** - Client Concierge Service
- **Virginia** - Permit Transparency dashboard
- **Need to see more of this** - Greater support for the permitting/regulatory workforce



Thank you!



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Resources



Permitting Innovation Hub Website

www.policyinnovation.org/permitting

Restoration Permitting Website

www.policyinnovation.org/restoration-permitting



Why NJ's Permitting Play Matters

EPIC's 9 Types of Permitting Reform

