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## NJ WASTEWATER PLANS STILL CONTROVERSIAL

EPA is again criticizing a bill that would further delay the implementation of water-quality rules and make it easier for builders to construct housing in undeveloped areas.

If it is passed in Trenton, the bill would continue an already five-year delay of regulations that were meant to protect drinking water supplies by limiting sewer lines and septic systems on more than 300,000 acres across New Jersey. Supporters, including many of the state's business groups, have said it could spur millions of dollars in the construction industry.

But the EPA thinks the delay puts drinking water in jeopardy. In a recent email to several state senators, the EPA's top official for New Jersey and New York, Judith Enck, urged the legislators to vote the bill down and "take all appropriate steps to accelerate, and not further delay, the planning and management processes necessary to protect the state's vital and precious water resources."

The New Jersey Builders Association says the bill is vital to continue the industry's recovery from the 2008 real estate collapse.

"Without an extension of the law, the threat of withdrawal of sewer service areas will resurface and will create considerable angst for the business community," Robert Fallone, the association's president, told a Senate committee recently.

Home building has been steadily recovering from the collapse, which brought about the lowest amount of residential construction in the state since World War II. Through October, 20,051 housing units were started in 2013 - the most since the pre-recession days of 2007.

Environmentalists slammed the bill, which is co-sponsored by state Sen. Paul Sarlo (D-Bergen).

The issue dates to 2008 when state Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Lisa Jackson approved rules to curtail development by limiting sewer lines and septic systems on more than 300,000 acres across the state.

The rules required counties to redraw planning maps to restrict sewer line extensions in wetlands, endangered-species habitats and land near the state's pristine streams. They also restricted septic systems in areas without sewers.

Counties were supposed to implement their plans in 2009, but that deadline was twice delayed.

(By Scott Fallon - The Sunday Star Ledger - 1/5/14)

*There has always been a fundamental issue as to whether wastewater planning, required by federal law, can be used as a tool to control growth. This issue is more obvious in New Jersey than other states, which creates controversy.*

- Gary Brown



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