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NICOLE MALLIOTAKIS
Member of Assembly 64th District

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August 16, 2013

Hon. Joseph Martens
Commissioner
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233

Dear Commissioner Martens:

The Department of Environmental Conservation had been working with local elected officials for years on exploring a means to resolve the problem of wild turkeys among the residential communities in Staten Island's East Shore. DEC has apparently granted a permit to the United States Department of Agriculture to capture and transport the birds in response to a complaint from the South Beach Psychiatric Center, the state-administered health facility that owns the land upon which many of the turkeys exist. We write to you to express our disappointment and displeasure with your agency's handling of this issue.

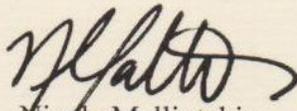
As you know, the problem was complex in that there was no common public opinion on how it should be resolved – an empirical fact established through a recent survey commissioned by your agency. It was imperative that DEC maintain sufficient contact with local representatives on the issue, as dissatisfaction among residents was inevitable regardless of the action taken. Sadly, we learned about the controversial "capture removal" operation in the news, after it had commenced, leaving us woefully short of answers to our constituents' inquiries on what was taking place.

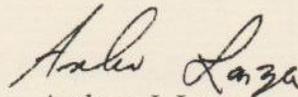
Had we been included in the conversation and worked on the issue collectively, we might have developed a more reasoned plan and avoided the public outrage we now face. While a solution was necessary and long overdue, this was not the most prudent

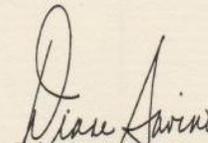
means to an end. There have been numerous ideas for humanely removing the birds, including offers to feed and care for them at privately-owned farms, yet DEC refused to explore creative ways to get it done. Furthermore, your agency is on record stating that any decisions regarding the matter "won't be made without a public discussion". The public discussion is now taking place in our offices and at civic meetings, without input from DEC.

We also wish to express our frustration with the erratic nature of DEC policy. In recent months we sensed a change in your agency and hoped that the days of preventing the removal of invasive plants that cause brushfires, granting variances for building in tidal wetlands, employing measures that disrupt the maritime industry on the Kill Van Kull for the protection of a bird, and nearly killing our entire state's maritime industry with proposed overreaching ballast water standards were long gone. But now, with this dismissive and questionable removal of turkeys, the only discernable trend established by DEC is that there is no trend. It has become increasingly difficult to work with an agency that is extremely unpredictable, lacks communication with elected officials, and displays a blatant disinterest in public opinion. We hope this is not a portent of things to come.

Very truly yours,


Nicole Malliotakis
Member of Assembly


Andrew J. Lanza
Senator


Diane Savino
Senator