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Shawn M. LaTourette, Commissioner 401
E. State St.
7th Floor, East Wing
P.O. Box 402
Trenton, NJ 08625-0402

Dear Commissioner LaTourette:

Today is the date for submission of the responses to the Request For Expression of Interest . This letter is in support of the Friends of the New Jersey School of Conservation (Friends) to become the managers of the School. Originally a support group for NJSOC and its staff, the Friends have stepped up to carry on the School's mission of teaching environmentally responsible behaviors that will encourage scientists, teachers, students and citizens to promote sustainable practices in their own communities. Made up of a committed group of supporters of the School of Conservation, the Friends have successfully secured a \$1 million grant from the state legislature to help repair and reopen the School and would be the best long term stewards of this NJ treasure. When the former manager unexpectedly announced that it was no longer going to continue its role, the Friends were there to carry on the legacy of this renowned educational center for the people of the state of New Jersey.

While a new Program Director has just recently been hired, the Friends had been operating the School of Conservation as a volunteer-run facility. Friends members served as program leaders and assistants; served on committees; participated in service projects and work days; helped with social media messaging, marketing and fundraising; and otherwise helped to plan and shape the future of NJSOC.

The Friends accomplished much in 2021. An access agreement with NJDEP was obtained to reopen SOC; committed volunteers helped do some major cleanups of the campus; and a full schedule of environmental programs and teacher training was offered. Welcoming back the first public school group was a red letter day for the Friends and for SOC. Utilizing donations secured from its many supporters, the Friends hired an independent group to develop a building assessment Of NJSOC's 57 buildings. The report will be used as a guide to develop a plan for the repair, restoration, and maintenance of the School's historic buildings, beginning with those most necessary for fully resuming NJSOC's programming. 2022 will be no different, only better!

It is the Friends goal to bring the School of Conservation back—better than it ever was. The commitment and resolve of a group of people who will tell anyone that the School of Conservation changed their lives are the kind of people who deserve to become the managers of the NJSOC. As a Friends member and former professor at the School of Conservation, I support their bid to become the managers of the School and believe that their history with and knowledge of the facility combined with support of numerous organizations and members like me, they are most deserving of NJDEP's support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline R Patterson

