

# New Jersey environmental groups sue Murphy administration over climate action

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New Jersey environmental groups said Thursday they are taking the state to court to force Gov. Phil Murphy's administration to set greenhouse gas emissions rules.

Late last year, the Department of Environmental Protection [denied a petition](#) from environmental groups asking the state to create formal rules for reducing emissions by 50 percent by the end of the decade.

The lawsuit the groups are filing is an appeal of that decision by EmpowerNJ, a coalition of more than 100 advocacy groups worried about climate change.

**Background:** Last summer, several major environmental groups — the Empower NJ coalition, BlueWaveNJ, Clean Water Action New Jersey, Delaware Riverkeeper Network, Don't Gas the Meadowlands Coalition, Environment New Jersey, Food & Water Watch, and the New Jersey Sierra Club — [filed a formal petition asking](#) the state to adopt such rules. Petitions of this kind in New Jersey can be reviewed by a court.

The DEP denied the groups' petition, arguing the state needs a "deliberate and coordinated action by all levels of government, economic sectors, communities and individuals."

That puzzled and angered environmental groups because Murphy has touted his environmental bona fides since running for office and, even before the petition was denied, announced the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent by the end of this decade. That matches a goal President Joe Biden has set for the country. But Murphy's order does not have the details and firm guidance environmental groups want.

**What's next:** The lawsuit is another sign of fracturing relationships among environmental advocates and Murphy. Late last year, the governor also tried to appoint a chemical industry representative to one of the state's main land preservation agencies.

"The governor talks about climate change while his administration spews more hot air" said Jeff Tittel, a former director the New Jersey Sierra Club and a member of the EmpowerNJ group.