

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 227

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 15, 2016

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 227 (1R).

This bill requires that whenever the Department of Transportation (DOT), New Jersey Turnpike Authority (NJTA), or South Jersey Transportation Authority (SJTA) plants vegetation for purposes of landscaping, land management, reforestation, or habitat restoration, that it plant only vegetation that is native to the State and that will thrive in the area in which it is being planted, with certain exceptions.

The bill requires the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), in consultation with the Division of Plant Industry in the Department of Agriculture, to identify those particular species of vegetation that are native to the State and that thrive in each plant hardiness zone found within the State, as identified pursuant to the most recent edition of the Plant Hardiness Zone Map published by the United States Department of Agriculture. When planting in any given plant hardiness zone, the DOT, NJTA, or SJTA, as applicable, generally would be required to plant only those species so identified.

The bill allows the DEP in consultation with the Division of Plant Industry in the Department of Agriculture and representatives of appropriate plant industry organizations and environmental organizations selected by the DEP, to authorize the DOT, NJTA, or SJTA, as the case may be, to use non-native vegetation for purposes of landscaping, land management, reforestation, or habitat restoration in prescribed circumstances where and when necessary if the use of native vegetation is not feasible, provided that the non-native vegetation is deemed to be non-invasive and not otherwise detrimental to the environment.

As reported, this bill is identical to Assembly Bill No. 963 (1R), as also reported by the committee.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Service determines that the bill may have a minimal cost impact to the General Fund and may provide a potential annual revenue savings to the General Fund.

By planting native vegetation, the State could realize savings from the discontinuation or reduction in the use of pesticides, fertilizers, and watering.

The initial one-time cost would result from identifying native vegetation to use in each plant hardiness zone within the State. There may be a minimal recurring cost impact to the General Fund for administering the feasibility exception.