

ASSEMBLY ENVIRONMENT AND SOLID WASTE
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 3369

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 15, 2012

The Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 3369.

This bill appropriates \$55 million from the “2009 Green Acres Fund” to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to provide grants or low-interest loans, or both, to assist local government units in the State to acquire or develop lands for recreation and conservation purposes. This bill also provides \$2,400,800 to local government units for three “coastal blue acres projects” with funds provided by the “Green Acres, Farmland and Historic Preservation, and Blue Acres Bond Act of 1995,” P.L.1995, c.204. The total amount of funding allocated for local government projects that are listed in this bill is \$57,400,800.

Of the amount from the “2009 Green Acres Fund,” \$39,187,800 is for projects to acquire lands for recreation and conservation purposes, and \$15,812,200 is for projects to develop lands for recreation and conservation purposes. The “2009 Green Acres Fund” was established pursuant to the “Green Acres, Water Supply and Floodplain Protection, and Farmland and Historic Preservation Bond Act of 2009,” P.L.2009, c.117.

Of the sum from the “2009 Green Acres Fund” for projects to acquire lands for recreation and conservations purposes: \$17,856,050 is allocated for planning incentive open space acquisition projects; \$790,000 is allocated for site specific incentive open space acquisition projects; \$3,757,500 is allocated for standard open space acquisition projects (i.e., projects located in municipalities that do not have an open space tax); \$2,375,600 is allocated for projects in “urban aid” municipalities; and \$14,408,650 is allocated for projects in densely or highly populated municipalities or sponsored by densely or highly populated counties.

Of the sum from the “2009 Green Acres Fund” for projects to develop lands for recreation and conservations purposes: \$800,000 is allocated for standard open space development projects (i.e., projects located in non-urban municipalities and counties); \$13,662,200 is allocated for local park development projects in urban aid municipalities or sponsored by densely populated counties; and

\$1,350,000 is allocated for local park development projects in densely or highly populated municipalities or sponsored by highly populated counties.

The projects listed have been approved by the DEP and the Garden State Preservation Trust.

The bill defines a “densely or highly populated municipality” as a municipality with a population density of at least 5,000 persons per square mile or a population of at least 35,000 persons; a “densely populated county” as a county with a population density of at least 5,000 persons per square mile; and a “highly populated county” as a county with a population density of at least 1,000 persons per square mile.

To the extent that there are funds remaining after those local government unit projects listed in this bill are offered funding, the bill also authorizes the DEP, with the approval of the Joint Budget Oversight Committee (JBOC), to use those funds to provide additional funding for local government unit projects listed in this bill as well as for local government unit projects previously approved for funding pursuant to various other laws.

The bill also allows the DEP, subject to the approval of the JBOC, to re-distribute moneys, which have been returned to the department due to project withdrawals, cancellations, or cost savings, or which have or will become available on or before June 30, 2013 due to interest earnings and loan repayments from various Green Acres bond act funds, for the purpose of providing additional funding, for recreation and conservation purposes, to previously approved and funded projects of local government units, or to local government unit projects listed in this bill. This additional funding, if provided from a Green Acres bond act, may include administrative costs.

Lastly, this bill approves funding for three “coastal blue acres projects.” This funding is from the “1995 New Jersey Coastal Blue Acres Trust Fund” established pursuant to section 27 of the “Green Acres, Farmland and Historic Preservation, and Blue Acres Bond Act of 1995.” This 1995 bond act provided to the DEP \$9 million for projects by local government units to acquire, for recreation and conservation purposes, lands in the coastal area that have been damaged by storms or storm-related flooding. P.L.1997, c.283 appropriated these funds to the DEP with the requirement that specific projects be approved by the JBOC. This bill approves three specific projects in the amount of \$2,400,800, instead of using the JBOC approval process for that purpose. It also amends the 1995 bond act to provide that specific projects proposed for coastal blue acres funding must be approved either by JBOC or by law.