

SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR **SENATE, No. 1085**

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MAY 17, 2012

The Senate Environment and Energy Committee favorably reports a committee substitute for Senate Bill No. 1085.

This bill directs the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to develop a program to provide for the stewardship of forests on State-owned lands. Under the bill, the department would identify State-owned forested lands for which a forest stewardship plan has not been developed and establish a priority order for the development of those plans. The department would develop, review, and adopt forest stewardship plans in the priority order established. Under the bill, the development, adoption, and implementation of forest stewardship plans would be required to meet the standards adopted for forest stewardship plans by the independent not-for-profit Forest Stewardship Council. The bill requires the department to seek and obtain the forest management certification from the Forest Stewardship Council, and to provide for the audit of the implementation of the plans by a Forest Stewardship Council certification body to obtain Forest Stewardship Council certification.

The bill prohibits forest harvesting in State natural areas administered by the department pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1966, c.54 (C.13:1B-15.101), lands held by the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust created pursuant to P.L.1968, c.425 (C.13:1B-15.119), or sensitive ecological areas, unless the department finds, in writing, that there will be a net environmental benefit on the site from the forest harvesting activities. Further, the bill requires the department to consider designating and including additional State-owned forested lands in the natural areas system pursuant to the "Natural Areas System Act," P.L.1975, c.363 (C.13:1B-15.12a et seq.).

The bill directs all revenues from forestry activities in excess of the costs of development and implementation of any forest stewardship plan implemented on wildlife management areas administered by the Division of Fish and Wildlife in the DEP to be deposited in the "hunters' and anglers' license fund" established pursuant to R.S.23:3-11 and R.S.23:3-12, to be used for the purposes prescribed for monies in that fund. All revenues derived from forestry activities on all other State-owned lands would be required to be deposited into a dedicated,

nonlapsing special account within the Department of Environmental Protection. Moneys in the special account must be used by the department to cover the reasonable costs of implementing the program. Any remaining revenues must be used for restoration projects to increase biodiversity, or to enhance habitat for rare, threatened or endangered flora or fauna, in State parks and forests, or in State wildlife management areas. Interest earnings and any return on investment of moneys deposited in the account must be credited to the account.

Finally, the bill requires the State Forester to biennially prepare a written report concerning the program, to be submitted to the Commissioner of Environmental Protection, the Governor, the Legislature, and the Chairpersons of the Senate Environment and Energy Committee and the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee, or their successor committees. The report is required to include but need not be limited to an explanation of the process developed for the adoption of forest stewardship plans, a list of the forest stewardship plans adopted, a description of the locations of the forest stewardship activities performed pursuant to the plans, ecological goals for each area on which forest stewardship activities have occurred, any forest regeneration procedures employed, cost effectiveness of the stewardship techniques used, environmental problems encountered in the program, the costs of the program, and any other information the State Forester deems appropriate.