

ASSEMBLY AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 4845

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JANUARY 25, 2021

The Assembly Agriculture Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 4845.

This bill would set a Statewide goal of conducting prescribed burns on a minimum of 50,000 acres in the pinelands area, and an additional 10,000 acres elsewhere in the State every year. A prescribed burn may be conducted by the State, the federal government, or a landowner or lessee with approval by the Department of Environmental Protection pursuant to the “Prescribed Burn Act,” P.L.2018, c.107 (C.13:9-44.11 et seq.). The bill would also require all relevant State agencies involved in environmental planning and land use management to incorporate the Statewide prescribed burn goal into all plans, programs, and surveys, whether they are Statewide or local initiatives, or undertaken in conjunction with the federal government.

The bill would also create a schedule for prescribed burns. The bill would require all prescribed burns throughout the State to occur between the months of November and March. According to the New Jersey State Forest Fire Service, prescribed burns are generally conducted during late winter months to reduce the amount of smoke produced and because weather conditions tend to be more predictable for safer controlled fires. Under this bill, prescribed burns would be required to be conducted and completed prior to prime wildfire season, which is typically during the months of April and May in New Jersey.

A prescribed burn is the deliberate ignition and controlled open burning of wildland fire fuels to attain resource management objectives, such as public safety, wildfire control, ecological, silvicultural, agricultural, or other natural resource management goals.