

FISCAL NOTE TO  
ASSEMBLY, No. 1994  
**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: November 12, 1996

Assembly Bill No. 1994 of 1996 extends coverage of the workers' compensation law, R.S.34:15-1 et seq., to any volunteer doing work for the Division of Parks and Forestry, the Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife, the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust or the New Jersey Historic Trust in activities authorized by the Commissioner of Environmental Protection.

In addition, the bill also extends coverage of the "New Jersey Tort Claims Act," N.J.S.59:1-1 et seq., to these volunteers. This provision will limit the liability of the volunteers during the period of voluntary service to the liability established for regular service of public employees covered by the "New Jersey Tort Claims Act."

The Department of Labor indicates that implementation of this bill will have no fiscal impact on its operating budget, as the anticipated increase in the workers' compensation client base is expected to be minimal.

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) concurs with the Department of Labor regarding the bill's administrative costs. However, with respect to the State's obligation to provide workers' compensation benefits under the bill, the OLS cannot project the State's benefit costs, as there is no workers' compensation claims experience available for this class of workers. The Division of Risk Management, Department of Treasury, could not project benefit costs for the same reason. As a self-insured entity, however, the cost to the State of providing benefits will be a direct function of its claims.

The OLS notes that in 1995 there were some 6,137 volunteers registered with the Department of Environmental Protection, including some 4,137 volunteers with the Division of Parks and Forestry, 1,800 volunteers with the Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife, and 200 volunteers with the Natural Lands Trust. (There are currently no volunteers registered with the New Jersey Historic Trust.) These volunteers provide a wide range of services to the State of varying degrees of risk, from the construction and maintenance of trails, buildings and exhibits to water monitoring, stream clean-up, wildlife management, and historical research.

This fiscal note has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67.