

# LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE TO

[First Reprint]

**SENATE, No. 1264**

# **STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: July 3, 1996

Senate Bill No. 1264 (1R) of 1996 creates the Ecotourism Development and Strategic Planning Task Force in the Department of Environmental Protection for the purpose of 1) identifying existing and potential natural, historic and cultural resources that could be promoted as ecotourism destinations; 2) evaluating the measures necessary to ensure that the promotion of a targeted resource results in the preservation and increased protection of the resource; 3) evaluating the capacity of the targeted resource to accommodate tourism-related development and activities; 4) investigating methods for funding the costs of ecotourism promotion and development as well as resource preservation; and 5) holding public hearings deemed necessary to solicit public input on these issues.

The bill directs the task force to be composed of employees from the Departments of Environmental Protection, Commerce and Economic Development, Transportation and Agriculture who have expertise in parks management, natural resource protection, forestry, wildlife conservation, economic development, small business attraction and retention, marketing, tourism, agri-business, and road and trail building. The bill requires the task force to report its findings, conclusions and any recommendations for legislative or administrative action to the Governor, the Legislature, the participating State departments, and the public within one year of the effective date of this act, after which the task force would be dissolved. An appropriation of \$25,000 is included to meet the administrative costs of the task force in carrying out its duties pursuant to this act.

The Office of Legislative Services estimates that the appropriation contained in the bill should be sufficient to cover all the non-salary administrative costs of the task force. With respect to the full reimbursement of salary costs for task force members, the appropriated amount may not be sufficient. This will ultimately depend on the scope of the work and the participation level of the affected State agencies. In general, the degree to which the task force carries out its responsibilities under the bill may depend in large part on the availability of its State employees and resources. This availability, in turn, will be primarily dependent on, and limited by, the task force agencies' ability to provide such services in the face of decreasing staff levels and operating funds caused by recent and (possible) future budgetary constraints.

Conversely, the long-range fiscal impact of the bill could benefit the State's economy if more revenues from ecotourism are generated as a result of the task force's final recommendations.

The legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

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