

# ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

## STATEMENT TO

[First Reprint]

## **ASSEMBLY, No. 658**

with Assembly committee amendments

# **STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: SEPTEMBER 21, 2000

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 658 (1R) with committee amendments.

Assembly Bill No. 658 (1R), as amended, requires the Pinelands Commission, in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Rutgers, the State University, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the United States Geological Survey (USGS), to assess and prepare a report on the key hydrologic and ecological information necessary to determine how the current and future water supply needs within the pinelands area may be met while protecting the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer system and while avoiding any adverse ecological impact on the pinelands area.

The bill also requires the DEP, in cooperation with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the USGS, to assess and prepare a report on sustainable water supply alternatives within Cape May County, but outside of the pinelands area, necessary to meet the current and future water supply needs of Cape May County while avoiding any adverse ground water or ecological impact on Cape May County, including analyses of potential future water supply demands based on future development potential and environmental constraints within Cape May County. The assessment and report shall also identify water conservation and re-use methods to protect the water supply of Cape May County. During the assessment and preparation of the report, the bill allows DEP to issue approvals or allocations for increased ground water withdrawals in Cape May County only upon a finding that they will not accelerate salt water intrusion, lower existing stream base flow or harm ecological functions or wildlife.

The DEP and other agencies shall hold one or more public hearings to explain and receive comments upon the scope of the work and research work plans for each of the studies authorized by the bill, and shall consider such public comments in framing the final scope of work and research plans authorized by this act

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The bill appropriates \$5.5 million to the Pinelands Commission for the pinelands area study and \$2 million to DEP for the extra-Pinelands Cape May Study.

**COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:**

The amendments add the provisions concerning consultation of the Fish and Wildlife and National Marine Fisheries Services, the requirement that the Cape May studies include analysis of future water supply demands, the requirement that DEP make findings in relation to groundwater withdrawal allocations during the completion of the study, and the requirements for public hearings.