ASSEMBLY AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 1365

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 14, 2021

The Assembly Agriculture Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 1365.

As amended, this bill prohibits the harassing or taking of certain wildlife (defined as "covered wildlife" in the bill) at a competitive event, except in conjunction with a field trial or field day authorized by a license issued pursuant to R.S.23:4-26. The bill also prohibits any person from organizing, sponsoring, promoting, conducting, or participating in a competitive event at which the participants harass or take covered wildlife except in conjunction with such an authorized field trial or field day. "Covered wildlife" is defined as a bobcat, coyote, crow, fox, mink, opossum, rabbit, raccoon, skunk, squirrel, weasel, woodchuck, or the dead body or parts thereof.

The bill provides that a person who violates the prohibitions in the bill would be guilty of a disorderly persons offense and, in addition to the applicable penalties pursuant to Title 2C of the New Jersey Statutes, would also have suspended for five years:

1) any license or permit issued to the person by the Division of Fish and Wildlife; and

2) all privileges to take or possess wildlife.

A disorderly persons offense is subject to a penalty of up to six months of imprisonment, a fine up to $1,000, or both.

This bill requires any covered wildlife injured as a result of a competitive event to be transported to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator or State licensed veterinarian for proper treatment or to be euthanized if necessary. The bill authorizes the Division of Fish and Wildlife to forfeit the remains of any covered wildlife killed at a competitive event held in violation of this bill or euthanized as a result of the competitive event. Forfeited remains would become property of the Division of Fish and Wildlife. The bill directs municipal police officers, the State Police, and law enforcement officers in the Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Division of Parks and Forestry in the Department of Environmental Protection to enforce the bill’s provisions.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2020-2021 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

The committee amendments:

1) revise the definition of "covered wildlife" to mean a bobcat, coyote, crow, fox, mink, opossum, rabbit, raccoon, skunk, squirrel, weasel, woodchuck, or the dead body or parts thereof; and

2) exempt the activities prohibited under the bill when they are in conjunction with a field trial or field day authorized by a license issued pursuant to R.S.23:4-26.