

**ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT
RESOLUTION No. 189**

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JULY 16, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman RONALD S. DANCER

District 12 (Burlington, Middlesex, Monmouth and Ocean)

Assemblyman DANIEL R. BENSON

District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

Assemblyman PARKER SPACE

District 24 (Morris, Sussex and Warren)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblymen Conaway and Wirths

SYNOPSIS

Expresses support for Friends of New Jersey School of Conservation proposal to temporarily maintain School of Conservation.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 7/20/2020)

1 **A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION** expressing support for the Friends of
2 the New Jersey School of Conservation’s proposal to temporarily
3 maintain the New Jersey School of Conservation.
4
5 **WHEREAS**, First established in 1949 as a field campus for colleges and
6 public schools, the New Jersey School of Conservation (NJSOC),
7 located in Stokes State Forest in Sussex County, is one of the
8 State’s main outdoors and environmental education centers; and
9 **WHEREAS**, Over the course of its celebrated 71-year history, the
10 NJSOC has served more than 400,000 students, teachers, masters
11 and doctoral candidates, faculty, and visiting professionals through
12 its 40,000 teacher training workshops and environmental education
13 programs; and
14 **WHEREAS**, In response to financial hardships the NJSOC was facing
15 at the time, Governor Brendan Byrne signed into law
16 P.L.1981, c.148 (C.18A:64I-1 et seq.), which permanently
17 designated the NJSOC as a school for environmental field study
18 under the direction of the Board of Trustees of Montclair State
19 University; and
20 **WHEREAS**, In addition to establishing a permanent designation for the
21 NJSOC, P.L.1981, c.148 authorized that annual appropriations be
22 made to Montclair State University for the NJSOC’s operation and
23 maintenance and required the university to request necessary funds
24 from the State to fulfill its role; and
25 **WHEREAS**, Unfortunately, due to financial hardships resulting from
26 the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic, Montclair State University
27 announced on May 14, 2020 that it would be closing the NJSOC
28 and returning management of the School to the Department of
29 Environmental Protection (DEP); and
30 **WHEREAS**, Since the announcement of the closure, Montclair State
31 University has pledged to continue to maintain the NJSOC until
32 September 1, 2020, as a plan for the NJSOC’s future is decided and
33 a new manager is sought. The university, in cooperation with the
34 DEP, has issued a Request for Expression of Interest as a first step
35 in establishing a new manager; and
36 **WHEREAS**, In response to the announced closing of the NJSOC, the
37 Friends of the New Jersey School of Conservation (FONJSOC), a
38 501(c)(iii) organization founded for and devoted solely to the
39 protection and promotion of the NJSOC, put forth a proposal to
40 temporarily volunteer as the manager of the NJSOC until a new
41 entity assumes active management on a permanent basis; and
42 **WHEREAS**, A proposed month-by-month budget and business plan
43 submitted by the FONJSOC to the Governor’s Office and the DEP
44 indicates that the organization, in its commitment to becoming
45 temporary stewards, would seek funds from private investors and
46 donors to cover necessary expenses as outlined by the FONJSOC.

1 Such necessary expenses include maintaining the NJSOC property
2 as well as its facilities and equipment and conducting limited
3 educational programming; and

4 **WHEREAS**, The proposal states that the FONJSOC is not requesting
5 funds from the DEP or any other governmental entity to cover
6 expenses related to the activities outlined in the proposal; and

7 **WHEREAS**, The proposal presented by the FONJSOC not only offers a
8 viable interim solution to maintain the NJSOC and prevent the
9 School from being damaged or vandalized, but also recognizes the
10 State's currently diminished fiscal condition by seeking private
11 funding; and

12 **WHEREAS**, The Legislature recognizes the significant educational
13 contributions the NJSOC has made throughout its history, and
14 believes that its continued existence will benefit thousands more
15 students, teachers, and other individuals in the future. The
16 temporary solution offered by the FONJSOC is a significant step
17 toward finding a new entity to serve as a permanent and active
18 manager moving forward; now, therefore,

19
20 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the General Assembly of the State of New
21 Jersey (the Senate concurring):
22

23 1. a. This Legislature expresses its support for the proposal
24 put forth by the Friends of the New Jersey School of Conservation
25 to temporarily manage the New Jersey School of Conservation until
26 such time as a permanent and active manager is selected and
27 approved. The plan, as submitted to the Governor's Office and the
28 Department of Environmental Protection, largely seeks to continue
29 the maintenance of the New Jersey School of Conservation so that
30 damage to the School and vandalism can be prevented. The
31 proposal also recognizes the State's current financial condition by
32 pledging to secure private funds to cover the necessary expenses as
33 outlined by the Friends of the New Jersey School of Conservation.

34 b. This Legislature recognizes and commends the New Jersey
35 School of Conservation for the notable contributions it has made to
36 the State in providing programming in outdoors and environmental
37 education to thousands of students, teachers, and other individuals
38 during its 71-year history. It is imperative that this education
39 resource is protected and maintained during the interim period in
40 which a permanent and active manager is being sought.

41
42 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
43 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly or the
44 Secretary of the Senate to the Governor of the State of New Jersey
45 and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

STATEMENT

First established in 1949 as a field campus for colleges and public schools, the New Jersey School of Conservation (NJSOC) is one of the State's main outdoors and environmental education centers located in Stokes State Forest in Sussex County. In 1981, Governor Brendan Byrne enacted a law, which permanently designated the NJSOC as a school for environmental field study under the direction of the Board of Trustees of Montclair State University. Unfortunately, due to financial hardships resulting from the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic, Montclair State University announced on May 14, 2020 that it would be closing the NJSOC and transferring management of the School back to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Since the announcement of the closure, Montclair State University has pledged to continue to maintain the NJSOC until September 1, 2020 as a plan for the NJSOC's future is decided and a new manager is sought. The university, in cooperation with the DEP, has issued a Request for Expression of Interest as a first step in establishing a new manager.

This concurrent resolution expresses support for a proposal put forth by an organization called the Friends of the New Jersey School of Conservation (FONJSOC), which provides that the organization would serve as a temporary steward of the NJSOC until such time as a new manager for the NJSOC is approved. If the proposal is approved, the FONJSOC intends to fund certain necessary expenses, primarily to maintain the NJSOC property as well as its facilities and equipment and to conduct limited educational programming. The FONJSOC proposes to cover these necessary expenses by seeking private funds from investors and donors. The group has stated that it will not seek funds from the DEP or any other governmental entity. The proposal was submitted to the Governor's Office and the DEP following the announcement of the School's closure by Montclair State University.

The concurrent resolution expresses support for the proposal as a measure that not only offers a viable interim solution to maintain the NJSOC and protect it from damage and vandalism, but also recognizes the State's currently diminished fiscal condition by seeking private funding to cover necessary expenses. It also notes the significant educational contributions the NJSOC has made throughout its history. Over the course of its celebrated 71-year history, the NJSOC has served more than 400,000 students, teachers, masters and doctoral candidates, faculty, and visiting professionals through its 40,000 teacher training workshops and environmental education programs.