

SENATE, No. 3548

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 11, 2021

Sponsored by:

Senator BOB SMITH

District 17 (Middlesex and Somerset)

SYNOPSIS

Sets minimum acreage goal and schedule for prescribed burns in pinelands area and Statewide.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT setting a minimum acreage goal and schedule for
2 prescribed burns, and supplementing P.L.2018, c.107 (C.13:9-
3 44.11 et seq.).
4

5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
6 of New Jersey:
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8 1. a. The department shall have a yearly goal of ensuring that
9 prescribed burns occur on a minimum of 50,000 acres in the
10 pinelands area, as defined pursuant to section 3 of P.L.1979, c.111
11 (C.13:18A-3), and on an additional 10,000 acres Statewide, whether
12 such burns are conducted by the department, the federal
13 government, or by landowners or lessees pursuant to the
14 “Prescribed Burn Act,” P.L.2018, c.107 (C.13:9-44.11 et seq.).

15 b. The department shall require that all prescribed burns in the
16 State be conducted and completed between the months of
17 November and March prior to the wildfire season in New Jersey.

18 c. The department, in conjunction with the Department of
19 Agriculture, the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council,
20 the Pinelands Commission, the State Planning Commission, and any
21 other relevant State entity, shall incorporate the goals of subsection
22 a. of this section into all applicable environmental and land
23 management plans, programs, and surveys, and any updates thereto.
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25 2. This act shall take effect immediately.
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28 STATEMENT
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30 This bill would set a Statewide goal of conducting prescribed
31 burns on a minimum of 50,000 acres in the pinelands area, and an
32 additional 10,000 acres elsewhere in the State every year. A
33 prescribed burn may be conducted by the State, the federal
34 government, or a landowner or lessee with approval by the
35 Department of Environmental Protection pursuant to the
36 “Prescribed Burn Act,” P.L.2018, c.107 (C.13:9-44.11 et seq.). The
37 bill would also require all relevant State agencies involved in
38 environmental planning and land use management to incorporate
39 the Statewide prescribed burn goal into all plans, programs, and
40 surveys, whether they are Statewide or local initiatives, or
41 undertaken in conjunction with the federal government.

42 The bill would also create a schedule for prescribed burns. The
43 bill would require all prescribed burns throughout the State to occur
44 between the months of November and March. According to the
45 New Jersey State Forest Fire Service, prescribed burns are generally
46 conducted during late winter months to reduce the amount of smoke
47 produced and because weather conditions tend to be more
48 predictable for safer controlled fires. Under this bill, prescribed

1 burns would be required to be conducted and completed prior to
2 prime wildfire season, which is typically during the months of April
3 and May in New Jersey.

4 A prescribed burn is the deliberate ignition and controlled open
5 burning of wildland fire fuels to attain resource management
6 objectives, such as public safety, wildfire control, ecological,
7 silvicultural, agricultural, or other natural resource management
8 goals.