SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 4152

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: DECEMBER 9, 2021

The Senate Environment and Energy Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 4152.

This bill appropriates $14,687,510 to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to provide grants to various nonprofit entities to acquire or develop lands for recreation and conservation purposes.

The funding in this bill is provided from constitutionally dedicated corporation business tax (CBT) revenues pursuant to Article VIII, Section II, paragraph 6 of the State Constitution, approved by the voters of the State in November 2014. The "Preserve New Jersey Act," P.L.2016, c.12 (C.13:8C-43 et seq.), implements the constitutional dedication of CBT revenues for open space, farmland, and historic preservation. The "Preserve New Jersey Green Acres Fund" was established by section 6 of the "Preserve New Jersey Act." The act provides that a certain amount of the portion of dedicated CBT revenues allocated each year for the Green Acres program is to be used for: the acquisition of lands for open space, including Blue Acres projects, and development projects on State lands administered by the DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife and Division of Parks and Forestry; grants and loans to fund local government open space acquisition and development projects; and grants to nonprofit entities to acquire or develop lands for recreation and conservation purposes. This bill appropriates funds to be used to provide grants to nonprofit entities to acquire or develop lands for recreation and conservation purposes. Further, of the funding allocated for acquisition and development projects by nonprofit entities, a certain percentage is to be used to fund stewardship activities undertaken by nonprofit entities. A "stewardship activity" is defined in the "Preserve New Jersey Act" as an activity, which is beyond routine operations and maintenance, undertaken to repair or restore lands acquired or developed for recreation and conservation purposes for the purpose of enhancing or protecting those lands for recreation and conservation purposes.

Of the amount appropriated by the bill to provide grants to various nonprofit entities: $8,810,860 is allocated for acquisition projects; $4.975 million is allocated for park development projects; and $901,650 is allocated for stewardship activity projects.

The projects listed in this bill have been approved by the DEP and the Garden State Preservation Trust.

The bill also would allow the DEP to re-distribute certain other moneys, which have been returned to the department due to project withdrawals, cancellations, or cost savings, for the purpose of providing additional funding, for recreation and conservation purposes, to previously approved and funded projects of nonprofit entities, subject to the approval of the Joint Budget Oversight Committee. This additional funding, if provided from a Green Acres bond act, may include administrative costs.