

SENATE, No. 4275

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED DECEMBER 13, 2021

Sponsored by:

Senator BOB SMITH

District 17 (Middlesex and Somerset)

SYNOPSIS

Changes entity responsible for management of NJ School of Conservation to nonprofit organization, and directs DOE to request funding for center annually.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT concerning the New Jersey School of Conservation and
2 amending, supplementing, and repealing various sections of
3 P.L.1981, c.148.

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5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
6 of New Jersey:

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8 1. Section 1 of P.L.1981, c.148 (C.18A:64I-1) is amended to
9 read as follows:

10 1. The 240 acre tract of land known as the New Jersey School
11 of Conservation, located in Stokes State Forest, Sussex county,
12 New Jersey, together with all the buildings thereon, and under the
13 management and control of the Division of Parks **[,]** and Forestry
14 **[and Recreation]** in the Department of Environmental Protection,
15 shall be used in perpetuity as a school for environmental field study
16 under the direction of **[the Board of Trustees of Montclair State**
17 **University]** the Friends of the New Jersey School of Conservation,
18 a tax-exempt nonprofit organization.

19 (cf: P.L.2017, c.178, s.42)

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21 2. (New section) a. No later than January 15 of each year, the
22 Friends of the New Jersey School of Conservation shall submit to
23 the Commissioner of Education a financial statement that contains
24 all available revenue and expenditure figures for the New Jersey
25 School of Conservation during the current fiscal year and an
26 estimate of revenue and expenditure figures for the subsequent
27 fiscal year, including a requested amount for State funding for the
28 subsequent fiscal year.

29 b. The Commissioner of Education shall include an appropriate
30 amount of funding to maintain and support the New Jersey School
31 of Conservation in the school aid portion of the Department of
32 Education's annual budget request. The Department of Education
33 shall grant all moneys appropriated for this purpose by an annual
34 appropriations act to the Friends of the New Jersey School of
35 Conservation, which shall expend the funds for the expenses
36 necessary for the operation of the New Jersey School of
37 Conservation, including maintenance of the grounds and buildings,
38 purchase of equipment, funding educational programs, and housing
39 students and teachers.

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41 3. Sections 2 and 3 of P.L.1981, c.148 (C.18A:64I-2 and
42 C.18A:64I-3) are repealed.

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44 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.**

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

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STATEMENT

This bill would change the management of the New Jersey School of Conservation (NJSOC), located in Stokes State Forest, Sussex County, from Montclair State University to the Friends of the New Jersey School of Conservation, a nonprofit organization.

The bill would also direct the Friends of the New Jersey School of Conservation to submit financial figures and a request for State funding to the Department of Education (DOE) no later than January 15 of each year. The bill would also direct the DOE to include an appropriate amount to maintain the operations of the NJSOC in the school aid portion of its annual budget request. Finally, the bill would repeal the sections of law that require the Board of Trustees of Montclair State University to request and expend funding for the NJSOC.

Originally established in 1949, the NJSOC is the oldest and the largest university-based environmental education facility in the nation, and some of its buildings were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps. It has served as a school for environmental field studies for K-12 students, college students, graduate students, and teachers. In 1981, Governor Brendan Byrne enacted a law that permanently designated the NJSOC as a school for environmental field study under the direction of the Board of Trustees of Montclair State University. However, in May 2020, Montclair State announced that it was no longer financially viable for the university to administer the school due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that it would transfer all control of the grounds back to the DEP.