

S. 3931

A. 7428

2009-2010 Regular Sessions

S E N A T E - A S S E M B L Y

April 6, 2009

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IN SENATE -- Introduced by Sen. MORAHAN -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Environmental Conservation

IN ASSEMBLY -- Introduced by M. of A. ZEBROWSKI, JAFFEE, CALHOUN, RABBITT -- read once and referred to the Committee on Environmental Conservation

AN ACT enacting the "Rockland Bergen Bi-state watershed flood prevention and protection act" and creating the Rockland Bergen Bi-state River Commission

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

1     Section 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Rockland  
2     Bergen Bi-state watershed flood prevention and protection act".  
3     S 2. The legislature finds and declares that the states of New York  
4     and New Jersey and their respective citizens share a common concern to  
5     protect their personal safety and property through the identification  
6     and remediation of potential flood hazards along the tributaries and  
7     watersheds of the Hackensack River, Mahwah River, Ramapo River, Saddle  
8     River, and Sparkill Brook/Creek that cross the interstate border region.  
9     The identification and remediation of potential flood hazards requires a  
10    bi-state comprehensive approach. A bi-state comprehensive flood  
11    prevention approach will also help ensure the preservation and maintenance  
12    of the environmentally beneficial impacts of the tributaries and  
13    watersheds of the Hackensack River, Mahwah River, Ramapo River, Saddle  
14    River, and Sparkill Brook/Creek. A bi-state approach will encourage  
15    open space and recreational opportunities along the tributaries and  
16    watersheds of the Hackensack River, Mahwah River, Ramapo River, Saddle  
17    River, and Sparkill Brook/Creek. The legislature further finds that  
18    there has been a long history of cooperation among state and local  
19    governmental entities and various private organizations and individuals

EXPLANATION--Matter in *ITALICS* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets  
[ ] is old law to be omitted.

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1 in the vicinity of the tributaries and watersheds of the Hackensack  
2 River, Mahwah River, Ramapo River, Saddle River, and Sparkill  
3 Brook/Creek.

4 The legislature therefore determines that there is a need to endorse  
5 and formalize that bi-state cooperative effort to identify and remediate  
6 potential flood hazards and to protect the natural, scenic and recre-  
7 ational opportunities of the tributaries and watersheds of the Hacken-  
8 sack River, Mahwah River, Ramapo River, Saddle River, and Sparkill  
9 Brook/Creek. The legislature further determines that the creation of a  
10 bi-state commission is an appropriate means to accomplish these very  
11 important goals.

12 S 3. As used in this act, "Bi-state region" shall mean the tributaries  
13 and watersheds of the Hackensack River, Mahwah River, Ramapo River,  
14 Saddle River, and Sparkill Brook/Creek, within the counties of Rockland  
15 in New York and Bergen in New Jersey. "Resident voter" shall mean an  
16 individual registered to vote and who actually votes in an election  
17 district within the county of Rockland in New York or the county of  
18 Bergen in New Jersey.

19 S 4. a. There is hereby created the Rockland Bergen Bi-state river  
20 commission, which shall be comprised of twelve voting members. Six  
21 members of New York shall be appointed as follows: one each, by the  
22 governor, the temporary president of the senate, the speaker of the  
23 assembly, the minority leader of the senate, and the minority leader of  
24 the assembly, of New York, all of whom shall be resident voters of the  
25 county of Rockland, New York; and the commissioner of the New York state  
26 department of environmental conservation or a designee thereof, who  
27 shall serve ex officio. Six members of New Jersey shall be appointed as  
28 follows: one each, by the governor, the temporary president of the  
29 senate, the speaker of the assembly, the minority leader of the senate,  
30 and the minority leader of the assembly, of New Jersey, all of whom  
31 shall be resident voters from either the county of Bergen, Essex, or  
32 Hudson; and the commissioner of the New Jersey department of environ-  
33 mental protection or a designee thereof, who shall serve ex officio.  
34 Additionally, the commission shall include six non voting members, as  
35 follows: the commissioner of the New York state department of transpor-  
36 tation or a designee thereof, who shall serve ex officio; the commis-  
37 sioner of the New Jersey department of transportation or a designee  
38 thereof, who shall serve ex officio; the county executive of the county  
39 of Rockland in New York or a designee thereof who shall serve ex offi-  
40 cio; the county executive of the county of Bergen in New Jersey, or a  
41 designee thereof, who shall serve ex officio; a representative of United  
42 Water Inc. or its successor; and a representative of the United States  
43 army corps of engineers.

44 b. Vacancies in the appointed positions on the commission shall be  
45 filled in the same manner as the original appointments were made.

46 c. Members of the commission shall serve without compensation, but the  
47 commission may, within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise  
48 made available to it, reimburse members for actual expenses necessarily  
49 incurred in the discharge of their official duties.

50 d. Members of the commission shall serve at the pleasure of the rele-  
51 vant appointing authority.

52 S 5. a. The commission shall organize as soon as may be practicable  
53 after the appointment of its members, and shall select two co-chairper-  
54 sons from its members, one from each state, and a secretary who need not  
55 be a member.

1 b. The commission shall meet regularly as it may determine. Meetings  
2 of the commission shall be at such times and places as the co-chairper-  
3 sons of the commission deem appropriate, but to the maximum extent prac-  
4 ticable and feasible, shall be rotated between the two states on an  
5 alternating basis. Meetings held in New Jersey shall be subject to the  
6 provisions and requirements of the "Senator Byron M. Baer Open Public  
7 Meetings Act," P.L. 1975, c. 231 (C.10:4-6 et seq). Meetings held in New  
8 York shall be subject to the provisions and requirements of that state's  
9 open meetings law, article 7 of the public officers law. The commission  
10 shall also meet at the call of either co-chairperson.

11 c. A majority of the voting membership of the commission shall consti-  
12 tute a quorum for the transaction of commission business. Action may be  
13 taken and motions and resolutions adopted by the commission at any meet-  
14 ing thereof by the affirmative vote of seven members of the commission.

15 d. The commission shall request assistance, and the services of, such  
16 employees of the two states, or any political subdivisions, instrumen-  
17 talities, entities, agencies, or authorities thereof, as it may require  
18 and as may be made available to it for the purpose of carrying out its  
19 duties under this act. If requested by the commission, the New Jersey  
20 department of environmental protection and the New York state department  
21 of environmental conservation shall provide primary staff support.

22 e. The commission may, within the limits of funds appropriated or  
23 otherwise made available to it for those purposes, employ such profes-  
24 sional, technical, and clerical staff and incur such traveling and other  
25 miscellaneous expenses as it may deem necessary in order to perform its  
26 duties.

27 S 6. The duties of the commission shall be to:

28 a. assess present and projected development, land use, and land  
29 management practices and patterns, and identify actual and potential  
30 environmental threats and problems, around the bi-state region, and  
31 determine the effects of those practices and patterns, threats, and  
32 problems upon the natural, scenic, and recreational resources of the  
33 bi-state region;

34 b. develop recommended regulations, procedures, policies, planning  
35 strategies, and model ordinances and resolutions pertaining to the  
36 protection, preservation, maintenance, management, and enhancement of  
37 the bi-state region which would be implemented as appropriate on a  
38 voluntary basis by those municipalities within the bi-state region;

39 c. coordinate environmental cleanup, maintenance, and protection  
40 efforts undertaken, for the benefit of the bi-state region by munici-  
41 palities within the bi-state region;

42 d. coordinate with the New York State department of environmental  
43 conservation and the New Jersey department of environmental protection,  
44 including but not limited to, their watershed management programs, the  
45 United States Army Corps of Engineers and all municipalities within the  
46 bi-state region.

47 e. recommend appropriate state legislation and administrative action  
48 pertaining to the protection, preservation, maintenance, management, and  
49 enhancement of the bi-state region;

50 f. advocate, and where appropriate, act as a coordinating, distribut-  
51 ing, or recipient agency for, federal, state, or private funding of  
52 environmental cleanup, maintenance, protection projects, flood  
53 prevention projects and flood hazard remediation for the bi-state  
54 region, which projects may include the work of the commission;

55 g. identify existing and projected flood hazards in the bi-state  
56 region;

1 h. recommend, propose and coordinate a bi-state comprehensive plan to  
2 remediate existing and projected flood hazards in the bi-state region;  
3 and

4 i. take such other action as may be appropriate or necessary to  
5 further the purpose of this act.

6 S 7. The commission shall, within 18 months of the date it organizes,  
7 and annually thereafter, prepare a progress report on its activities,  
8 and submit it, together with any recommendations for legislation, admin-  
9 istrative action, or action by local governments, to the governors and  
10 legislatures of the states of New Jersey and New York.

11 S 8. The comptroller of the state of New Jersey and the comptroller of  
12 the state of New York are hereby authorized and empowered from time to  
13 time to examine the accounts and books of the commission, including its  
14 receipts, disbursements, and such other items referring to its financial  
15 standing as such comptrollers may deem proper and to report the results  
16 of such examination to their respective governor and legislature.

17 S 9. This act shall take effect upon the enactment into law by the  
18 state of New Jersey of legislation having substantially similar effect  
19 with this act, but if the state of New Jersey shall have already enacted  
20 such legislation, this act shall take effect immediately; provided that  
21 the Rockland Bergen bi-state river commission shall notify the legisla-  
22 tive bill drafting commission upon the occurrence of the enactment of  
23 the legislation provided for in this act in order that the legislative  
24 bill drafting commission may maintain an accurate and timely effective  
25 data base of the official text of the laws of the state of New York in  
26 furtherance of effecting the provisions of section 44 of the legislative  
27 law and section 70-b of the public officers law.