§ 57-0105. Legislative findings and intent.

The legislature hereby finds that eastern Long Island contains a maritime region of statewide importance known as the Pine Barrens-Peconic Bay system.

The legislature finds that within the Pine Barrens-Peconic Bay system the federal, state, county and local governments own and manage significant properties in the form of parks, preserves, historic sites and protected open space, where there is an interdependent and reciprocal relationship between human activities and natural processes, and where fishing, agriculture and tourism have been the dominant industries for more than three hundred fifty years.

The legislature also finds that within the Pine Barrens-Peconic Bay system natural processes have created unique landforms such as Robin's Island, Shelter Island, Gardiners' Island, Fisher's Island, Long Island's North and South Forks, and numerous wetlands, bluffs and beaches.

The legislature finds that the Long Island Pine Barrens, an area encompassing over one hundred thousand acres in the county of Suffolk, is of critical importance to the state because it overlies the largest source of pure groundwater in New York. The Pine Barrens are interconnected to the Peconic Bay system by the Peconic River, the longest groundwater river in New York, and the ecologic and hydrologic integrity of this system should be protected in a comprehensive plan adopted by the state and individual local governments.

The legislature also finds that the Pine Barrens-Peconic Bay system contains one of the greatest concentrations and diversities of endangered, threatened and special concern species of plants and animals to be found in the state, and that protection of their habitats is in the best interest of the people of New York.

The legislature further finds that the Pine Barrens-Peconic Bay system contains many other unique natural, agricultural, historical, cultural

and recreational resources that are mutually supportive and ultimately dependent upon maintenance of the hydrologic and ecologic integrity of this region.

Therefore, the legislature finds that the purpose of this title is to allow the state and local governments to protect, preserve and properly manage the unique natural resources of the Pine Barrens-Peconic Bay system and to encourage coordination of existing programs and studies affecting land and water resources in the region and to protect the value of the existing public and private investment that has already been made to acquire land in the region.

The legislature further finds that a portion of the system known as the Central Pine Barrens area requires the preparation and implementation of a state supported regional comprehensive land use plan that will provide for the preservation of the core preservation area, protection of the Central Pine Barrens area and for the designation of compatible growth areas to accommodate appropriate patterns of development and regional growth with recognition of the rights of private land owners and the purpose of preservation of the core area.

The legislature recognizes that the provisions of this title may restrict the beneficial use of some lands currently in private ownership. These restrictions are deemed to be necessary and desirable to protect and preserve the hydrologic and ecologic integrity of the Central Pine Barrens area as well as the public's health and welfare for future generations. The legislature intends that a comprehensive regional land use plan be implemented whereby private landowners whose property is located within the Central Pine Barrens area are afforded an opportunity to receive benefits from the plan such as transferable development rights, conservation easements, rights and values transfers, purchase of development rights and/or fee acquisition with monetary compensation.