

News From NJ Senate Democrats



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SMITH BILL TO MATCH FEDERAL FUNDS FOR WILDLIFE PRESERVATION APPROVED

TRENTON - A bill sponsored by Senator Bob Smith to provide matching State funds for federal grants to benefit wildlife protection and wildlife habitats was unanimously approved by the Senate Environment Committee.

"Any reputable investor will tell you that to make money, you have to spend money," said Senator Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, the Chair of the Environment Committee. "In this case, by guaranteeing State funds for wildlife protection efforts, we are ensuring that every dollar spent by New Jersey is matched by \$3 in federal money. Our initial investment will go four times further in helping agencies which care for wildlife and maintain their habitats."

The bill, S-1863, would require that the State appropriate from the General Fund any shortage in the State's matching commitment to be eligible for the federal "State Wildlife Grants Program." Historically, New Jersey has funded its matching commitment through the sale of conservation license plates, a check-off on State income tax forms to donate to endangered and non-game species protection efforts, and an assortment of other minor funding sources. In recent years, however, these funding mechanisms have not been sufficient, and Senator Smith's bill would ensure that when there is a shortfall in funding, the State would fund the deficit.

"The federal wildlife grants have been integral in helping the State protect endangered species and non-game animals," said Senator Smith. "However, programs set aside to raise the matching State funds have lagged behind in recent years, endangering New Jersey's eligibility for the federal program. By requiring the State to make up the difference, we are affirming the State's participation in the federal program and ensuring that New Jersey is not forgotten when it comes to federal wildlife protection funds."

The bill also appropriates a supplemental amount of \$381,715 for the current year to make up for wildlife fund shortfalls. The bill now heads to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee before being considered by the full Senate.

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