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SMITH BILLS TO RESTORE & PROTECT BARNEGAT BAY ADVANCE

Several Bills Now Await Governor's Signature

TRENTON – Several pieces of legislation sponsored by Senate Environment and Energy Committee Chairman Bob Smith (D-Middlesex) that would take key steps to clean up and reinvigorate Barnegat Bay were approved today by the full Senate.

"Today is a good day for the Barnegat Bay and its surrounding ecosystem," said Senator Smith. "I thank my colleagues in the Assembly and I appreciate the bipartisan manner in which these bills were approved. The Bay is one of the state's greatest environmental treasures and economic engines. Every year the Bay generates \$3.3 billion of revenue and supports tens of thousands of jobs. The steps we have taken today will go a long way towards revitalizing Barnegat Bay and will have an amazingly positive impact for generations to come."

The first bill, S-1410, also sponsored by Senator Kip Bateman, would require that the State Soil Conservation Committee adopt standards "which shall modify the existing soil erosion and sediment control standards to include soil restoration measures" that would ensure restoration of soils to the maximum extent possible.

The second, S2341, also sponsored by Senator Bateman, would require the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), to conduct a study and prepare a report that evaluates the water quality of the Barnegat Bay ecosystem to determine whether the Bay is impaired pursuant to the federal Clean Water Act. A finding that water quality is impaired would require the DEP to adopt tough new standards for all who discharge into the Bay.

The third, S2275, also sponsored by Senator Bateman, would require the Department of Transportation (DOT) to conduct a study of all stormwater basins in the Barnegat Bay watershed owned by the state, New Jersey Transit, or the New Jersey Turnpike Authority to identify which are malfunctioning. The DOT would be required to prioritize repairs and include them in its capital plan every year.

The legislation now awaits the Governor's signature.

Additionally, two other pieces of legislation that will have a positive impact on the Bay were approved by the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee.

"Cleaning up the Bay will require more than just one law or act by the state. It requires comprehensive planning and a variety of measures to ensure that no aspect of revitalizing this area is left untouched. These bills are the first crucial step in that movement," said Senator Smith.

The first, S-1815, would permit Ocean County, or the Ocean County Utilities Authority, to establish, provide and maintain a stormwater utility for the purpose of creating a stormwater management system to manage the stormwater runoff of the county. The bill would also require the Department of Environmental Protection to create a stormwater utility guidance manual to provide guidance to municipalities, counties, and authorities seeking to establish stormwater management systems. The rate structure guidance provided in the stormwater utility guidance manual would provide the means and methods of computing rates for stormwater utility charges and must be directly related to the specific costs of the stormwater management system.

The second, S-1856, would authorize the Ocean County Planning Board, in conjunction with each municipality within the Barnegat Bay watershed, to develop a stormwater and nonpoint source

pollution management plan for the watershed. The stormwater management and nonpoint source pollution plan would be designed to reduce siltation and prevent pollution caused by stormwater runoff or nonpoint sources that could degrade the water quality of the Barnegat Bay and its tributaries, interfere with water-based recreation, or adversely affect aquatic, estuarine, and marine life. The bill would permit the County Planning Board to collect a fair share contribution from new development around the Bay.

The legislation now moves to the full Senate.