

For Release: Immediate
Thursday, January 06, 2011

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SMITH BILLS TO RESTORE & PROTECT BARNEGAT BAY CLEAR SENATE

Bills Create Ocean County Stormwater Utility & Pollution Management Plan

TRENTON – Two 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.

“Barnegat Bay is not only one of our greatest natural and environmental resources, but it is also an economic engine for New Jersey,” said Senator Smith. “Every year the Bay generates \$3.3 billion of revenue and supports tens of thousands of jobs. Enacting measures such as these will ensure the restoration and protection of the Bay, while also protecting its economic viability.”

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 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 is currently on second reading in the Assembly.