



Governor Murphy supports A1675 Authorizing Certain Prescribed Burns

Today, Governor Murphy signed A1675 which authorizes prescribed burning in certain circumstances.

“New Jersey Audubon applauds Governor Murphy for signing legislation today authorizing prescribed burning. This legislation will help to protect public safety and improve the health of our native ecosystems.” Said Kelly Mooij, Vice President of Government Relations for New Jersey Audubon

Fire is a normal and necessary process helping to ensure healthy habitat and has been unnaturally suppressed. It is critical for our wildlife, particularly in the Pinelands, where many rare species depend upon the role fire plays in the ecosystem by providing for their specific habitat needs. From a public safety perspective, a lack of fire creates a dangerous situation by allowing excessive fuel loads of brush, pine needles, and scrub trees to buildup, leading to fires that burn more intensely and out of control when they do occur. Accordingly, to protect public safety and promote healthy forest habitat, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) uses prescribed burns to mimic natural forest fires while minimizing threats to people and property.

Prior to the enactment of this legislation, however, constraints limited the ability to conduct an adequate number of controlled burns on state and private lands, resulting in dangerous, uncontrolled wildfires including the 2007 fire when a flare was dropped from a plane and 2500 acres burned before bringing it under control. From 1960 to today, wildfires made more intense from a lack of prescribed burning have caused the evacuation of over 6,000 New Jersey residents, destroyed homes, and closed roads, schools and utilities.

This legislation will help to increase the number of prescribed burns, mitigate the dangers presented by buildup of fuel loads, and promote healthy forest growth that improves habitat by permitting licensed, trained professionals to administer burns independently or in coordination with the DEP. Additionally, it ensures safeguards are in place, such as the requirement for homeowner notification prior to burning near private property. Similar laws already exist in 16 states, including Pennsylvania, and New Jersey Audubon thanks Assemblyman Dancer, as well as Senators Beach and Smith for their sponsorship and longtime leadership in ensuring the passage of this critical measure.

“This law is the culmination of a well over a decade’s worth of work by New Jersey Audubon and our partners, including the Pinelands Preservation Alliance and the New Jersey Farm Bureau,” said Kelly Mooij, Vice President of Government Relations, New Jersey Audubon. “Increasing the capacity of trained professionals to conduct prescribed burns will benefit New Jersey’s residents, forests, and wildlife in unique habitats such as the Pinelands.”

About New Jersey Audubon:

New Jersey Audubon is a privately supported, not-for profit, statewide membership organization. Founded in 1897, and one of the oldest independent Audubon societies, New Jersey Audubon fosters environmental awareness and a conservation ethic among New Jersey's citizens; protects New Jersey's birds, mammals, other animals, and plants, especially endangered and threatened species; and promotes preservation of New Jersey's valuable natural habitats. For more information, visit www.njaudubon.org.