Environmental Enhancements

NJPACT - Resilient Environments and Landscapes

REAL will modernize New Jersey's environmental land use rules to respond to climate change by considering risks such as sea-level rise and chronic flooding, and to facilitate climate resilience by supporting green infrastructure and renewable energy.

REAL Science

According to the *2020 New Jersey Scientific Report on Climate Change*:

- Surface and groundwater quality will be impaired as increased nutrients and contaminants enter waters due to runoff from more intense rain events.
- Freshwater fish, like brook trout, that need cold-water habitats are expected to lose habitat as water temperatures increase due to climate change.
- Reptiles with temperature-dependent sex determination could experience changes in sex ratios as New Jersey temperatures increase.
- Climate change is likely to facilitate expansion of invasive plant species.
- 29% of New Jersey's bird species are vulnerable to climate change, including the American Goldfinch which is the state bird of New Jersey.

REAL Action

- Providing enhanced and consistent stormwater management.
- Increasing vegetation and environmentally sensitive area protection in wetlands, dunes, and threatened and endangered (T & E) species habitat by adopting more stringent design standards, mitigation requirements, and greater preservation requirements.
- Promoting nature-based solutions, such as living shorelines and marsh restoration, and encouraging responsible land use planning, particularly in coastal communities.

REAL Environmental Enhancement

Coastal Zone Management

- Clarify that the presence of engineered dunes, created for the purpose of shore protection, does not diminish the importance of any other natural dune area.
- Amend various timing restrictions to better protect important seasonal wildlife activities.

Freshwater Wetland

- Require justification that proposed wetland impacts are necessary regardless of whether the impacts meet other rule criteria.
- Require an onsite assessment for proposed vernal habitat impacts in non-surface water connected wetlands.

- Require removal of existing impervious surface, where practicable, within 25' of wetlands under a special activity transition area waiver for redevelopment to promote restoration.
- Ensure all activities in transition areas are situated at least 25' from freshwater wetlands to limit impacts.

Flood Hazard

- Ensure isolated waters draining less than 50 acres are regulated to better protect headwater areas.
- Ameliorate T & E species habitat fragmentation and remove obstacles to low-flow aquatic passage for bridge/culvert replacement projects.
- Require a general permit for horizontal directional drilling to protect against accidental release of contaminants.
- Place riparian zones on the non-oceanfront side of barrier island complexes.
- Place riparian zones and protect the channel of all naturally occurring waters with a discernible channel regardless of drainage area.