

SENATE, No. 4578

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

221st LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 5, 2025

Sponsored by:

Senator PARKER SPACE

District 24 (Morris, Sussex and Warren)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senator Tiver

SYNOPSIS

Establishes minimum acreage goal and schedule for prescribed burns in pinelands area and Statewide.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



1 AN ACT setting a minimum acreage goal and schedule for
2 prescribed burns, and supplementing P.L.2018, c.107 (C.13:9-
3 44.11 et seq.).

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
6 of New Jersey:

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8 1. a. Within one year from the effective date of this act, the
9 department shall ensure that prescribed burns occur annually in the
10 pinelands area, as defined pursuant to section 3 of P.L.1979, c.111
11 (C.13:18A-3), and on additional acreage Statewide. The minimum
12 acreage of the prescribed burns shall be:

13 (1) for the first year of prescribed burns, 25,000 acres in the
14 pinelands area and 10,000 additional acres Statewide;

15 (2) for the second year of prescribed burns, 30,000 acres in the
16 pinelands area and 12,000 additional acres Statewide;

17 (3) for the third year of prescribed burns, 35,000 acres in the
18 pinelands area and 14,000 additional acres Statewide;

19 (4) for the fourth year of prescribed burns, 40,000 acres in the
20 pinelands area and 16,000 additional acres Statewide;

21 (5) for the fifth year of prescribed burns, 45,000 acres in the
22 pinelands area and 18,000 additional acres Statewide;

23 (6) for the sixth and each subsequent year of prescribed burns,
24 50,000 acres in the pinelands area and 20,000 additional acres
25 Statewide;

26 b. The prescribed burns may be conducted by the department,
27 the federal government, or by landowners or lessees pursuant to the
28 "Prescribed Burn Act," P.L.2018, c.107 (C.13:9-44.11 et seq.).

29 c. The department shall require that all prescribed burns in the
30 State be conducted and completed between the months of
31 November and March prior to the wildfire season in New Jersey.

32 d. The department, in conjunction with the Department of
33 Agriculture, the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council,
34 the Pinelands Commission, the State Planning Commission, and any
35 other relevant State entity, shall incorporate the requirements of
36 subsections a. and b. of this section into all applicable
37 environmental and land management plans, programs, and surveys,
38 and any updates thereto.

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40 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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45 This bill would direct the Department of Environmental
46 Protection, within one year of the bill's enactment, to ensure that
47 prescribed burns are conducted annually on certain minimum
48 acreage in the pinelands area, and elsewhere in the State. The

1 prescribed burns are to take place on minimum acreage beginning
2 with 25,000 acres in the pinelands area and an additional 10,000
3 acres Statewide and increasing over a period of six years to a final
4 total of 50,000 acres in the pinelands area and 20,000 acres
5 Statewide.

6 A prescribed burn may be conducted by the State, the federal
7 government, or a landowner or lessee with approval by the
8 Department of Environmental Protection pursuant to existing law.
9 The bill would also require all relevant State agencies involved in
10 environmental planning and land use management to incorporate
11 the Statewide prescribed burn goal into all plans, programs, and
12 surveys, whether they are Statewide or local initiatives, or
13 undertaken in conjunction with the federal government.

14 The bill would require all prescribed burns throughout the State
15 to occur between the months of November and March. According
16 to the New Jersey State Forest Fire Service, prescribed burns are
17 generally conducted during late winter months to reduce the amount
18 of smoke produced and because weather conditions tend to be more
19 predictable for safer controlled fires. Under this bill, prescribed
20 burns would be required to be conducted and completed prior to
21 prime wildfire season, which is typically during the months of April
22 and May in New Jersey.

23 A prescribed burn is the deliberate ignition and controlled open
24 burning of wildland fire fuels to attain resource management
25 objectives, such as public safety, wildfire control, ecological,
26 silvicultural, agricultural, or other natural resource management
27 goals.