

ASSEMBLY STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

**ASSEMBLY, No. 4264**

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: JUNE 22, 2022

The Assembly State and Local Government Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 4264.

This bill would establish a Liberty State Park Design Task Force within the Department of Environmental Protection.

The 17-member task force is charged with assisting the DEP in developing:

(1) short-term action items designed to improve public use and enjoyment of conservation and recreation areas within the park; and

(2) a long-term master plan that (a) improves park facilities, programs and amenities, (b) creates new transportation and mobility services to the park to ensure equal access for all community residents to the park and within the park, (c) further preserves the park's natural resources and wildlife and protects against climate change, and (d) includes plans for the department to generate revenue and other funds, donations, or endowments to ensure adequate reserve funds for the ongoing and future maintenance of the park.

In carrying out its responsibilities, the task force is to give due consideration to the natural, historic, cultural, recreational, economic and scenic resources, and the local, State, and national significance of Liberty State Park. The task force is to (1) reflect the diversity of the Hudson County and the Jersey City community, (2) give due consideration to the creation of recreational, cultural, and economic opportunities and access to the park for all residents, and (3) consider how the local community, especially minority and local small business owners can participate and benefit from the improved park.

The task force is directed to present the DEP with immediate action items designed to improve conservation and recreational opportunities in Liberty State Park, including immediate plans to address:

(1) the need for environmental justice and social equity to ensure equal access to the park for public use and enjoyment of conservation areas, open space, and recreational areas;

(2) the preservation of natural resources through a resiliency plan that allows the park to withstand rising sea levels and future flooding;

(3) wildlife management and habitat restoration planning for the protection of native and endangered species and migratory birds;

(4) transportation and mobility planning to improve access for all community residents to the park and within the park;

(5) upgrades to park facilities, programs, and amenities, and development of new recreational and athletic facilities suitable for all age groups; and

(6) cultural and arts opportunities in the park.

The bill further directs the task force, no later than six months after the bill is enacted into law, to submit to the DEP a master plan that outlines long-term plans and capital projects designed to address the aforementioned issues and provides for the continued maintenance of the park.

Lastly, this bill appropriates \$250 million from the General Fund to the DEP to support activities identified by the Liberty State Park Design Task Force to improve recreational activities and maintain and upgrade scenic and wildlife habits and areas at Liberty State Park.

On September 23, 2021, the DEP Commissioner created, by Administrative Order, a 17-member Liberty State Park Design Task Force for the purposes of developing conceptual and design plans to improve conservation and recreational opportunities in Liberty State Park. This bill expands on the DEP's action by establishing in statute that task force as a permanent entity.

The 1,200-acre Liberty State Park, located in Jersey City, is situated along the mouth of the Hudson River where it meets the Upper New York Bay, and has the Manhattan skyline, the Statue of Liberty, and Ellis Island as its backdrop. It represents one of the last remaining contiguous open green spaces along the highly developed Northern New Jersey/New York City waterfront. The park is also the only location in New Jersey with ferry service to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. The park is home to the historic Central Railroad of New Jersey Terminal, the NJ Empty Sky 9/11 Memorial, the Liberty Science Center, a nature center, a waterfront promenade, a marina, and picnic and play areas, among other amenities.