

**SENATE RESOLUTION No. 93**

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**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

**221st LEGISLATURE**

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INTRODUCED APRIL 15, 2024

**Sponsored by:**

**Senator PARKER SPACE**

**District 24 (Morris, Sussex and Warren)**

**Co-Sponsored by:**

**Senator Steinhardt**

**SYNOPSIS**

Opposes all proposals to change designation of Delaware Water Gap from National Recreation Area to National Park and Preserve, including proposal from Delaware River National Park and Lenape Preserve Alliance.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As introduced.



**(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/6/2024)**

**SR93 SPACE**

1   **A SENATE RESOLUTION** opposing certain proposals concerning the  
2       Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.  
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4   **WHEREAS**, The Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area  
5       (“Delaware Water Gap”) is a unit of the National Park System  
6       located in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, that currently  
7       encompasses nearly 70,000 acres, of which 21,978 acres are in  
8       Sussex County and 9,222 acres are in Warren County; and  
9   **WHEREAS**, The Delaware Water Gap offers numerous recreational  
10      opportunities, such as bicycling, bird watching, boating, camping,  
11      canoeing, cross country skiing, fishing, hiking, horseback riding,  
12      hunting, swimming, walking, and special events, and is home to  
13      numerous rare, threatened, and endangered species of plants,  
14      amphibians, fish, mammals, and reptiles; and  
15   **WHEREAS**, In 2022, and again in 2023 with a revised proposal, the  
16      Delaware River National Park and Lenape Preserve Alliance  
17      proposed to change the designation of the Delaware Water Gap  
18      from a National Recreation Area to a National Park and  
19      Preserve, and to expand the area of the present Delaware Water  
20      Gap; and  
21   **WHEREAS**, The Delaware River National Park and Lenape Preserve  
22      Alliance plan to establish the “Delaware River National Park and  
23      Lenape Preserve” (“Redesignation Project”), which would  
24      include the Delaware Water Gap and the Middle Delaware  
25      National Scenic and Recreational River, would limit or prohibit  
26      certain recreational activities in certain areas of the park, such as  
27      hunting, that are enjoyed by both residents and visitors; and  
28   **WHEREAS**, If enacted, such a change would be likely to negatively  
29      affect the economic prosperity of businesses in Sussex and Warren  
30      counties that benefit substantially from tourism to the Delaware  
31      Water Gap, and residents would no longer have the opportunity to  
32      enjoy hunting and other recreational activities locally; and  
33   **WHEREAS**, The specifics and scope of the Redesignation Project, and  
34      the environmental, economic, and agricultural impact of the project  
35      remain unknown, including if, and how, fees will be collected, and  
36      how the project will be funded; and  
37   **WHEREAS**, The Redesignation Project raises concerns that the rights  
38      of local property owners will be disregarded, and eminent domain  
39      will be used by the federal government to acquire private and State  
40      property adjacent to the Delaware Water Gap, including nearby  
41      High Point State Park, Stokes State Forest, and Worthington State  
42      Forest; and  
43   **WHEREAS**, The conversion of private property to federal parkland  
44      would result in a reduction of tax revenue in affected  
45      municipalities, may negatively affect local school districts in the  
46      area, and may negatively affect the local economy by preventing  
47      farmers who lease land along the Delaware River from producing  
48      crops that feed livestock; and

SR93 SPACE

1   **WHEREAS**, The Redesignation Project may further affect the local  
2       economy in a similar manner by potentially prohibiting or  
3       restricting recreational activities, including hunting, which will  
4       cause local businesses in Sussex and Warren counties to suffer  
5       financially, force tourism to other states that offer these  
6       activities, and prevent residents from enjoying hunting and other  
7       recreational activities locally; and

8   **WHEREAS**, It is fitting and proper for this House to express  
9       opposition to proposals, such as the proposal from the Delaware  
10      River National Park and Lenape Preserve Alliance, to change the  
11      designation of the Delaware Water Gap from a National  
12      Recreation Area to a National Park and Preserve and expand the  
13      current boundaries of the Delaware Water Gap National  
14      Recreation Area, to ensure that the rights of local property  
15      owners are protected, to prevent financial and economic losses in  
16      the area, and to protect the freedom of local residents and visitors  
17      to enjoy all of the recreational activities the Delaware Water Gap  
18      has to offer; now, therefore,

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20       **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate of the State of New Jersey:*

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22       1. This House opposes all proposals to change the designation of  
23      the Delaware Water Gap from a National Recreation Area to a  
24      National Park and Preserve and to expand the Delaware Water Gap  
25      National Recreation Area beyond its current boundaries.

26

27       2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,  
28      shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to the  
29      Governor and Lieutenant Governor of the State of New Jersey, the  
30      Secretary of the Interior, the Director of the National Park Service,  
31      the Regional Director of the Northeast Region of the National Park  
32      Service, every member of Congress elected from this State, and the  
33      Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental  
34      Protection.

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STATEMENT

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39       This resolution expresses opposition to all proposals to change  
40      the designation of the Delaware Water Gap from a National  
41      Recreation Area to a National Park and Preserve and expand the  
42      current boundaries of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation  
43      Area. The Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area  
44      (“Delaware Water Gap”) is a unit of the National Park System  
45      located in New Jersey and Pennsylvania that encompasses portions  
46      of Sussex and Warren Counties.

47       The Delaware Water Gap offers numerous recreational  
48      opportunities that are enjoyed by the residents of Sussex and

## SR93 SPACE

1 Warren counties, as well as residents from throughout the State and  
2 visitors from across the country. A recently proposed project titled  
3 “Delaware Water Gap: Redesignation Project” (“Redesignation  
4 Project”) seeks to change the designation of the Delaware Water  
5 Gap from a National Recreation Area to the Delaware River  
6 National Park and Lenape Preserve, and to expand the area of the  
7 present Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. The  
8 specifics and scope of the Redesignation Project and the  
9 environmental, economic, and agricultural impacts of the project,  
10 remain unknown, including if, and how, fees will be collected, and  
11 how the project will be funded.

12 In addition, the Redesignation Project raises concerns that the  
13 rights of local property owners may be disregarded. It is possible  
14 the federal government will use eminent domain to acquire private  
15 and State property alongside the Delaware Water Gap National  
16 Recreation Area, including nearby High Point State Park, Stokes  
17 State Forest, and Worthington State Forest. The conversion of  
18 private property to federal property would result in numerous  
19 economic ramifications. It would result in a reduction of tax  
20 revenue in affected municipalities, may negatively affect local  
21 school districts in the area, and may negatively affect the local  
22 economy by preventing farmers who lease land along the Delaware  
23 River from producing crops that feed livestock.

24 The Redesignation Project may further affect the local economy  
25 by prohibiting or restricting recreational activities, including  
26 hunting. As stakeholders determined in 2016, prohibiting these  
27 recreational activities will cause local businesses in Sussex and  
28 Warren counties to suffer financially, and prevent local residents  
29 from enjoying hunting and other recreational activities locally.