LAFAYETTE TOWNSHIP
SUSSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

RESOLUTION 2026-42

RESOLUTION REQUESTING GOVERNOR MIKIE SHERRILL RESTORE FULL FUNDING TO THE NEW JERSEY SCHOOL OF CONSERVATION

WHEREAS, the New Jersey School of Conservation (NJSOC) is located on a 240-acre tract of land in Stokes State Forest, Sandyston Township, Sussex County, New Jersey and is our nation's **oldest year-round**, residential environmental education center in the country, having been in existence for over 75 years; and

WHEREAS, in 1981, Governor Brendan Byrne signed legislation designating that the NJSOC shall be used in perpetuity as a school for environmental field study under the direction of the Board of Trustees of Montclair State College; and

WHEREAS, on October 21, 2022, the State of New Jersey Legislature amended N.J.S.A. 18A:641-1, et seq. transferring the direction of the NJSOC property from Montclair State University to the Friends of the New Jersey School of Conservation, a tax-exempt non-profit organization; and

WHEREAS, as previously stated, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:641-1, NJSOC shall be used in perpetuity as a school for environmental field study under the direction of the Friends of the New Jersey School of Conservation pursuant to a 20-year lease between the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and Friends of New Jersey School of Conservation; and

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 18A:641-5 provides that the State of New Jersey shall provide all monies appropriated by an annual appropriation act for the maintenance and support of the NJSOC to the Friends of New Jersey School of Conservation, including maintenance of the grounds and buildings, purchase of equipment, funding educational programs and housing students and teachers; and

WHEREAS, any monies appropriate under N.J.S.A. 18A:641-5 shall pass through the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to the Friends of New Jersey School of Conservation; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey has eliminated funds for the operation and maintenance of the NJSOC in the 2026 budget thus forcing the inevitable closure of the NJSOC; and

WHEREAS, such a closing will hurt the Sussex County economy, where the NJSOC has worked with nine (9) local businesses contributing $1.7 million to the local economy over the past three (3) years; and

WHEREAS, partnerships, associations and program with numerous local community organizations including Sussex County ARC, Sussex County Library Sussex County Self Sufficiency-NJ Youth Corps, Sussex County Chamber of Commerce will be curtailed; and

WHEREAS, eight (8) Sussex County elementary schools, who rely on their environmental education programming through field trips at the NJSOC, will be halted; and

WHEREAS, countless Sussex County educators who have attended professional development training on conservation, stewardship and climate change will no longer have the benefit of this necessary trainings; and

WHEREAS, the Sussex County Community College has recently entered into a partnership to allow for field study, research and interns at the NJSOC for their students; and

WHEREAS, if not funded, the NJSOC would be forced to layoff 30 dedicated professionals, many of whom live in Sussex County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Township Committee of the Township of Lafayette, in full consideration of the negative impact on the economy of Sussex County, the State of New Jersey, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the students, educators and researchers of the State of New Jersey, does hereby call upon Governor Mikie Sherrill to immediately restore the New Jersey School of Conservation's budget request of Three Million ($3,000,000) Dollars.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Municipal Clerk of the Township of Lafayette shall forward a certified true copy of this Resolution to the Office of Governor Mikie Sherrill, Senator Parker Space, Assemblywoman Dawn Fantasia, Assemblyman Michael Inganamort and the New Jersey School of Conservation.

CERTIFICATION

Certified as a true copy of a Resolution adopted by the Lafayette Township Committee, Sussex County, New Jersey via e-vote held on June 22, 2026.

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AnnaRose Fedish, RMC
Municipal Clerk

Motion by Hughes, seconded by Aikens, to adopt the Restore Funding to NJSOC Resolution.
Motion carried by e-vote: McGill, Aikens, Carlson, O'Leary, Hughes.