

P.L.2016, CHAPTER 17, *approved July 15, 2016*
Assembly, No. 2949

1 AN ACT concerning diamondback terrapins and supplementing
2 P.L.1973, c.309 (C.23:2A-1 et seq.).

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

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7 1. a. Notwithstanding any law, rule, or regulation to the
8 contrary, the diamondback terrapin shall be designated as a
9 nongame indigenous species and shall be subject to the laws, rules,
10 and regulations governing the importation, care, possession, and
11 breeding of that type of animal in the State.

12 b. Any diamondback terrapin, including any nest or egg
13 thereof, shall be protected by the Department of Environmental
14 Protection, any other State agency, and any local governmental
15 entity in the same manner and to the same extent as any nongame
16 species of reptile indigenous to the State that is protected by "The
17 Endangered and Nongame Species Conservation Act," P.L.1973,
18 c.309 (C.23:2A-1 et seq.), any other applicable State law, or any
19 rule or regulation adopted pursuant thereto.

20 c. The commissioner shall investigate populations, distribution,
21 habitat needs, limiting factors, and other biological and ecological
22 data concerning the State's diamondback terrapin population to
23 determine management measures necessary for their continued
24 ability to sustain themselves successfully. On the basis of such
25 determinations, the commissioner shall develop management
26 programs which shall be designed to insure the continued ability of
27 the State's diamondback terrapin population to perpetuate
28 themselves successfully.

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30 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

35 This bill provides the protection afforded by "The Endangered
36 and Nongame Species Conservation Act" to the diamondback
37 terrapin.

38 The bill designates the diamondback terrapin as a nongame
39 indigenous species subject to the same laws, rules, and regulations
40 governing other nongame indigenous reptiles in the State. As a
41 result of this designation, it would no longer be legal to catch or
42 take diamondback terrapin in New Jersey. The bill also requires the
43 Commissioner of Environmental Protection to investigate biological
44 and ecological data concerning the State's diamondback terrapin

1 population and determine management measures necessary for the
2 continued viability of the State's diamondback terrapin population.

3 The diamondback terrapin (*Malaclemys terrapin* or *Malaclemys*
4 *palustris*) is native to New Jersey and inhabits the State's coastal
5 salt marshes and estuaries along the Atlantic Coast and Delaware
6 Bay. Habitat loss and road mortality pose major threats to the
7 health of the population. Each year, hundreds of terrapins are killed
8 by motor vehicle, particularly in summer months when females
9 actively search for suitable nest sites. Affording the diamondback
10 terrapin protection as a nongame indigenous species subject to "The
11 Endangered and Nongame Species Conservation Act" will help
12 encourage conservation of the species and its habitats.

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17 Provides diamondback terrapins protection as nongame
18 indigenous species.