



## New Jersey Pinelands Commission **PRESS RELEASE**

**November 12, 2010**

Contact: Paul Leakan

Phone: 609.894.7300

E-mail: [info@njpines.state.nj.us](mailto:info@njpines.state.nj.us)

### **Pinelands Commission approves plans to install solar energy generating facilities on the capped landfill at the Stafford Business Park**

NEW LISBON, N.J. – During its regular meeting today, the Pinelands Commission approved plans to develop solar energy generating facilities on a portion of a capped landfill at the Stafford Business Park.

The Commission amended its existing agreement with Stafford Township and Ocean County by authorizing a modification to the deed-restriction on the closed landfill, thereby enabling the Township's designated redeveloper to install solar panels on a 30-acre portion of the landfill.

"In approving this amended agreement, the Commission recognizes the unique conditions and set of circumstances that exist at the Stafford Business Park," said John C. Stokes, the Commission's Executive Director. "This project calls for the installation of solar panels on top of a closed landfill located in a Pinelands Regional Growth Area, and it is consistent with the goals, objectives and requirements of the Pinelands Plan.

"Additionally, this amended agreement will fund a study of landfills throughout the Pinelands that have yet to be properly closed and pose significant risks to the environment," Stokes added. "Information from this study will be used to help facilitate the closure of these landfills, which will have far-ranging, long-term benefits for the Pinelands' environment."

The Stafford Business Park is situated on a 363-acre site located just south of Route 72. It is located within a Pinelands-designated Regional Growth Area, a land use area in which intensive residential and business development is authorized by the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan. A portion of an approximately 50-acre landfill located onsite was deed restricted as open space as part of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that the Commission reached in June 2006. That agreement allowed Stafford Township's government to proceed with a plan to redevelop its Business Park as a means to pay for the environmentally safe closure of landfills that are located onsite and were contributing to the pollution of groundwater supplies. The agreement also resulted in the permanent preservation of 645 acres of off-site lands, the incorporation of "Green Building" measures at the Business Park, water quality improvements to Route 72, and the implementation of rare plant and animal management programs.

To mitigate for the loss of open space on the landfill, Stafford Township will obligate its redeveloper to provide the Pinelands Commission with a monetary contribution of \$152,900. The Commission will use the contribution to fund a study of approximately 40 existing landfills in the

**(MORE)**

## **Pinelands Press Release**

*Page 2...*

Pinelands that remain unclosed despite Pinelands requirements. Under the study, Commission staff will collect existing data from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, identify public health and environmental receptors, build a geographic database, identify critical leachate parameters and thresholds, and characterize landfills on the basis of health and environmental risks. The study will determine the continuing environmental impacts associated with these landfills, while identifying the appropriate means of landfill closure to ameliorate these impacts.

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

1) Why does this project call for installing solar panels on a capped landfill, as opposed to being constructed on the rooftops of existing businesses and homes and/or the parking lots at the Stafford Business Park?

**Answer:** Solar arrays have been installed on the roofs of many of the existing retail stores in the commercial development and on top of the multi-family affordable housing at the Stafford Business Park. The Township's Redeveloper has indicated that the energy generated by these panels, however, is insufficient to satisfy all of the needs of the end users in the Business Park. Additionally, the Township's Redeveloper did explore the possibility of utilizing the commercial parking areas for the solar project. However, it found this option infeasible because of the following: substantial areas of the parking lots are shaded by the large retail buildings for a good part of the day and, therefore, are unsuitable for solar installations; the orientation of the panels, which would have to be relatively flat in the parking lots, would greatly decrease the productivity of the system by as much as 2/3rds; installation would be very difficult given the need for extensive trenching within the parking lots to run underground wiring and could present issues regarding interference with existing utility lines, alteration of traffic patterns and loss of extensive areas of the parking lot during construction; and installation of the solar arrays within the parking lots would also present significant challenges with regard to motorist safety and maintenance due to vehicular strikes and vandalism.

2) Has there been a determination as to whether these solar energy facilities have an adverse impact on threatened or endangered plant or animal species?

**Answer:** Yes. In late July 2010, the Township's Redeveloper provided the Pinelands Commission with reports prepared by Robert Zappalorti of Herpetological Associates and Joseph Arsenault. Zappalorti and Arsenault, who are highly regarded animal and plant experts, conducted an ecological assessment of the capped landfill and concluded that the development of renewable energy facilities on the landfill would not adversely affect threatened and/or endangered plant or animal species. As detailed in these reports, the closed landfill has modest ecological value and does not provide critical habitat for threatened or endangered animal species, nor does it contain threatened or endangered plants.

3) Why did the Commission elect to seek funds for a study of unclosed landfills as mitigation for the loss of open space on the landfill at the Stafford Business Park rather than using those funds to permanently protect land?

**Answer:** This study is viewed as a significant conservation measure because it will facilitate the

**(MORE)**

## **Pinelands Press Release**

*Page 3...*

closure of landfills that have remained unclosed despite Pinelands' requirements. The absence of such a study to target remedial actions to those landfills, which pose significant environmental risks, has led to years of delay. The Commission strongly supports efforts to permanently preserve environmentally-sensitive land in the Pinelands. However, in this instance, if the contribution was equated to the cost of Pinelands Development Credits, it would serve to protect between 60 and 80 acres of land, at least twice the amount of land being affected on the landfill but a rather nominal conservation outcome compared to the closure of high risk landfills throughout the Pinelands.

####