



New Jersey Pinelands Commission **PRESS RELEASE**

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Pinelands Commission approves nearly \$4 million expenditure to preserve more than 3,200 acres in Atlantic, Burlington and Ocean counties

Money to be disbursed from the Pinelands Conservation Fund

NEW LISBON, N.J. – The New Jersey Pinelands Commission’s Permanent Land Protection Committee has agreed to dedicate nearly \$4 million to preserve more than 3,200 acres in Atlantic, Burlington and Ocean counties in the Pinelands. During its meeting today, the Committee approved the expenditure from the Pinelands Conservation Fund to preserve the land in partnership with local governments and nonprofit organizations.

“More than 53 percent of the Pinelands has been permanently protected, and we are pleased to work with local governmental and nonprofit organizations to protect an additional 3,200 acres of ecologically valuable land,” said John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the Commission. “Permanent land protection is clearly one of the most critical aspects of preserving the Pinelands environment, and the Commission is committed to protecting important natural, cultural, historic and agricultural land in perpetuity.”

The Permanent Land Protection Committee approved funding for the preservation of 12 properties in numerous planning areas that it has deemed to have significant environmental resources. The funding is contingent upon the execution of the contract, supported by a certification of fair market value, within 120 days. These areas include:

- **The Toms River Corridor in Jackson Township, Ocean County** (four projects totaling 225 acres, up to \$1 million allocated to the Ocean County Natural Lands Trust);
- **The Medford and Evesham Sub-regional Planning Area in Burlington County** (two projects totaling 27 acres, up to \$245,200 allocated to the Rancocas Conservancy);
- **The Elwood Corridor in Mullica Township, Atlantic County** (one project totaling 593 acres, up to \$300,000 allocated to the New Jersey Conservation Foundation);
- **The Rural Development Area in Hamilton Township, Atlantic County** (one project totaling 700 acres, up to \$300,000 allocated to Atlantic County);
- **The Forked River Mountains in Lacey and Ocean townships, Ocean County** (three projects totaling 1,591 acres, up to \$2,027,473 allocated to the New Jersey Conservation Foundation and the Ocean County Natural Lands Trust); and
- **The South River in Buena Vista Township, Atlantic County** (one project totaling 70 acres, up to \$10,000 allocated to Buena Vista Township).

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Including the nearly \$4 million allocation from the Pinelands Conservation Fund and the cost-share funding from local governmental and nonprofit organizations, a total of nearly \$20 million worth of properties will be preserved.

Specific details regarding each property will be released upon completion of contract negotiations.

The Pinelands Conservation Fund was created in 2004 as part of an agreement with the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities to permit the construction and upgrade of an electric transmission line through eastern portions of the Pinelands. Under the agreement, the special fund was established to further the Pinelands protection program and ensure a greater level of protection of the unique resources of the Pinelands Area. The utility that built the transmission lines, Atlantic City Electric (formerly Conectiv), provided \$13 million to establish the Fund.

The Fund is dedicated to three types of projects: \$6 million for permanent land protection; \$3.5 million for conservation planning and research projects; and \$3.5 million to support community planning and design initiatives.

In 2006, the Commission hired a program facilitator, Conservation Resources Inc. of Chester, N.J., to assist in the development of a land acquisition program and to identify land preservation projects.

“In choosing areas for acquisition, ecological factors are paramount. However, the presence of prehistoric and historic resources increase their value,” said Pinelands Commissioner Candace McKee Ashmun, who chairs the Permanent Land Protection Committee. “The properties under consideration all meet these criteria. Permanent protection through acquisition will help us meet the goals of the state and federal Pinelands protection statutes.”

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