



New Jersey Pinelands Commission **PRESS RELEASE**

June 11, 2004

Contact: Francis Rapa

Phone: 609.894.7300

E-mail: info@njpines.state.nj.us

Commission launches special conservation effort in Evesham, Medford Townships *William Penn Foundation grant to help protect rare plants and animals*

SOUTHAMPTON, NJ - The New Jersey Pinelands Commission has received a \$73,000 grant from the William Penn Foundation to fund an innovative natural resource conservation planning project for southern portions of Evesham and Medford Townships in Burlington County. The Commission was joined by State and local officials at its monthly meeting today as it officially accepted the grant and authorized the project to begin.

Among those present were Evesham Mayor Gus Tamburro, Medford Township Councilwoman Pola Ingelsby, New Jersey Green Acres Administrator John Flynn, Evesham Township Manager Ed Sasdelli and Medford Township Manager Alan Feit.

“This initiative is in response to new data on important natural resources in this area which clearly suggests that a re-evaluation of the zoning and development policies is in order here,” said James J. Florio, Pinelands Commission Chairman. “Our objective is to develop an approach which better protects those resources while accommodating development at appropriate locations.”

Pinelands Commissioner Candace Ashmun, who chairs the Commission’s Permanent Land Protection Committee, added, “We want to express our gratitude to the William Penn Foundation for their support of this project. Notwithstanding the success of the Pinelands Protection Program as a model for regional land-use management and natural resource protection, the Commission recognizes the need for a timely response to new information and conditions. Cooperative sub-regional planning in cases where unique challenges arise, irrespective of municipal boundaries, provides the tool for such updates. Like our recent effort in the Toms River Corridor, this project will fine-tune the Pinelands Plan to meet these local challenges more effectively.”

Under this project, the Pinelands Commission will organize a steering committee, comprised of representatives from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the two municipalities to oversee development of a conservation plan for the 22-square-mile project area. In addition, an advisory task force will be formed that includes representatives from non-governmental sectors, including environmental and development organizations.

Penn Foundation Grant

Page 2

The Commission and its cooperating partners will prepare a detailed natural resource conservation plan, which may include innovative zoning, land preservation, resource management and community design recommendations. Also included will be a comprehensive natural resource inventory and integrated land acquisition strategy. In coordination with enhanced resource protections, the plan may include streamlined regulatory requirements for developing in the appropriate locations and within certain standards.

The southern portions of Evesham and Medford Townships include significant areas designated under the Pinelands protection program for low-density residential development. However, data compiled in recent years has documented that no less than seven threatened and endangered plant and animal species are found in this area. Additionally, the Pinelands Commission has completed major studies of the Mullica River and Rancocas Creek watersheds, which inventoried extensive data on the area's water quality, aquatic and wetland resources and plant and animal communities.

“As development has increased in the area in recent years, it has become more apparent that there is a growing potential for conflicts between Pinelands development and conservation objectives,” explained John Stokes, Pinelands Commission Executive Director. “This has been reinforced by some recent high-profile disputes, which have resulted in costly litigation and have put a strain on Pinelands Commission resources. We want to address these issues in a way that avoids future conflicts, protects natural resources and provides predictability to the development community.”

###

The William Penn Foundation is dedicated to improving the quality of life in the Greater Philadelphia region through efforts that foster rich cultural expression, strengthen children's futures, and deepen connections to nature and community. In partnership with others, the Foundation works to advance a vital, just, and caring community. Learn more about the Foundation online at www.william penn foundation.org.