



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
news releases

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**CHRISTIE ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES \$4.5 MILLION GREEN ACRES
PRESERVATION OF 293 ACRES IN THE BARNEGAT BAY WATERSHED**
*DEP PARTNERS WITH JACKSON TOWNSHIP, OCEAN COUNTY AND THE TRUST FOR
PUBLIC LAND ON ACQUISITION*

TRENTON – A 293-acre tract in the Barnegat Bay watershed in Jackson Township, Ocean County, and which lies in the Pinelands National Reserve, has been permanently preserved in a \$4.5 million land preservation deal that will offer water quality and habitat protection, while providing new recreation lands, DEP Commissioner Bob Martin announced today.

Preservation of the “Cedar Branch” tract, which has been purchased from a developer, Hovbilt, Inc., will help protect water quality of the Cedar Branch and Pole Brook tributaries of the Toms River, which is the source of more than 25 percent of the fresh water running into Barnegat Bay. These streams also recharge the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer, which is a major drinking water source for the Central and South Jersey regions.

“The Christie Administration remains steadfast in its commitment to improving water quality in the Barnegat Bay watershed, which is an ecologically and economically vital asset to the state,” Commissioner Martin said. “Land preservation is a critical component of the Governor’s comprehensive restoration plan for the bay because it improves water quality by reducing the impacts of stormwater pollution on the bay.”

This 293-acre acquisition brings the state’s total of preserved land in the Barnegat Bay watershed to 3,635 acres since Governor Christie announced his comprehensive Barnegat Bay restoration plan in December of 2010.

Partners in this land transaction include the DEP’s Green Acres Program, which directly provided \$500,000; Jackson Township, \$2 million; Ocean County, \$1.75 million; and The Trust for Public Land (TPL), \$250,000 through a Green Acres grant.

“We recognize the importance of maintaining this integral part of our environment,” said Jackson Township Mayor Michael Reina. “By understanding our commitment to the environment, we strengthen our resolve to maintain and improve the quality of life, not only for current residents but, more importantly, for generations to come.”

Slightly more than 57 of the preserved acres will be managed by the DEP’s Division of Fish and Wildlife as an addition to the state’s 12,700-acre Colliers Mills Wildlife Management Area; another 203 acres will be turned over to Ocean County for a new preserve to be called “Cedar Branch” in Jackson Township; and 32 acres will be managed by Jackson Township as a local park.

“Ocean County is pleased to be a partner in this acquisition,” said Ocean County Freeholder John C. Bartlett Jr., who serves as liaison to the Ocean County Natural Lands Trust. “By working with the state, our municipalities and agencies like the TPL, Ocean County has successfully preserved environmentally sensitive lands throughout the County. This parcel has many environmental benefits. It helps protect the headwaters of the Toms River and is adjacent to property already preserved by the County.”

The parcels that comprise the Cedar Branch project are primarily forested and are adjacent to the Colliers Mills WMA. The property includes prime habitat for a variety of wildlife species, including the Cooper’s hawk, red-shouldered hawk, barred owl, Pine Barrens tree frog, and the northern pine snake. Cedar Branch also offers passive recreational opportunities for visitors; a historic woods road traverses the property, provides access to former cranberry bogs on the property that have reverted into natural ponds, and offers beautiful views.

“As the pace of real estate development picks back up in Ocean County, now is the time for us to step up our efforts to protect the unique places that make the Pinelands special,” said Anthony Cucchi, The Trust for Public Land’s New Jersey State Director. “We applaud the State of New Jersey, Ocean County and Jackson Township for acting when they did to conserve this property in order to protect our drinking water and the health of Barnegat Bay.”

Governor Christie launched the 10-point comprehensive plan on Dec. 9, 2010, by making a landmark announcement of an agreement to close the Oyster Creek nuclear power plant in Lacey Township a decade ahead of the expiration of its federal operating license.

The Barnegat Bay Plan sets in place multifaceted strategies to restore and enhance the bay, including efforts to reduce stormwater pollution, develop water quality standards, close key gaps in scientific data, improve public stewardship of the bay, and preserve land in the bay’s 660-square-mile watershed.

In 1978 the Pinelands National Reserve was established by Congress as the country’s first National Reserve. It includes portions of seven southern New Jersey counties, and encompasses over one-million acres of farms, forests and wetlands.