

Disclaimer

These minutes reflect the actions taken by the Commission during its December 12, 2025 meeting. Although these minutes have been approved by the Commission, no action authorized by the Commission during this meeting, as reflected in these minutes, shall have force or effect until ten (10) days, Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays excepted, after a copy of these minutes has been delivered to the Governor for review, unless prior to expiration of the review period the governor approves same, in which case the action shall become effective upon such approval. These minutes were delivered to the Governor on December 16, 2025.

PINELANDS COMMISSION MEETING

MINUTES  
December 12, 2025

*All participants were either in-person or present via Zoom conference and the meeting was livestreamed through YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/live/ZlbKkYCVW3c>*

Commissioners Participating in the Meeting

Nicholas Asselta, Alan W. Avery Jr., Jerome H. Irick, Mark Lohbauer, Gaetano Matro, Mark Mauriello, Jonathan Meade, William Pikolycky, Ryck Signor and Douglas Wallner. Also participating were Executive Director Susan R. Grogan, Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Jay Stypinski and Governor's Authorities Unit representative Michael Eleneski.

Commissioners Absent

Deborah Buzby-Cope, Theresa Lettman, Laura E. Matos and Jessica Rittler Sanchez.

Call to Order

Vice Chair Avery called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m.

Stacey Roth read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement (OPMA).

Executive Director (ED) Grogan called the roll and announced the presence of a quorum. 10 Commissioners participated in the meeting.

The Commission pledged allegiance to the Flag.

Minutes

Vice Chair Avery presented the minutes from the Commission's November 14, 2025 meeting. Commissioner Lohbauer moved the adoption of the minutes. Commissioner Matro seconded the motion.

The minutes from the November 14, 2025 Commission meeting were adopted by a vote of 8 to 0. Commissioner Meade and Commissioner Pikolycky joined the meeting after the vote.

### Committee Reports

Vice Chair Avery provided a summary of the November 21, 2025 Policy and Implementation Committee meeting:

The Committee approved the open and closed session minutes of the October 31, 2025 meeting. The Committee heard two presentations from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) staff members regarding artificial turf. Cecile Murphy from the Green Acres Program presented a review of the Green Acres Local and Nonprofit Assistance Program for synthetic turf funding and their associated policy and application requirements. Greg Raspanti from the Division of Science and Research provided a review of the current science regarding synthetic turf, including risk factors and environmental impacts.

The Committee also discussed potential Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) standards for the development of accessible trails in wetlands and wetlands buffers. Planning Specialist Katie Elliott presented a summary of issues related to setting new CMP standards for development of accessible trails.

### Executive Director's Report

ED Grogan provided information on the following matters:

- A vacancy in the science office has been filled. A new employee will begin in late January. Recruitment has begun for a Business Assistant and an Environmental Specialist to fill current and upcoming vacancies.
- The New Jersey Historic Trust is reviewing design and specification documents for the Fenwick Manor rehabilitation project. Once the design is approved, the Commission can move forward with hiring a contractor.
- Staff is currently preparing for the implementation of the CMP amendments that will take effect in early January. The actual rule language must be inserted into the CMP, updates to the application fee calculator must occur and new document templates must be created.
- New Pinelands merchandise is now for sale. Four different Pinelands themed magnets and playing cards that feature both fauna and flora of the Pinelands are available for purchase. Both new products are made in the USA and money generated from sales support the Katie Fund (See attached slides with more details).

Chuck Horner, Director of Regulatory Programs, provided information on the following regulatory matters:

- The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the NJDEP recently contacted the Commission about clearing a forested portion of Wharton State Forest for runway approach safety at Hammonton Airport. In the past, the Commission has approved clearing at the Hammonton Airport.
- An inquiry was received regarding siting standards for battery energy storage facilities in the Pinelands Area.
- Staff recently advised an applicant that its proposal to mine 74 acres at an existing resource extraction site that is located just north of Route 72 in Woodland Township is not consistent with the CMP's threatened and endangered (T&E) species standards. The T&E species survey was accompanied by a habitat conservation plan.
- An application was received earlier this month for a steel fabrication facility located on a former closed pipe manufacturing plant. The parcel is located in the Rural Development Area in both Buena Vista Township and Folsom Borough. A pre-application meeting was held with the applicant and representatives from Atlantic County. The applicant advised the Commission that they need to be fully operational, with all permits obtained, by January 1, 2027. An industrial building is proposed, including a railroad spur by which the steel will arrive. Due to the prior use of the site, there are no wetland or T&E species concerns.

April Field, Chief Permit Administrator, provided updates on the following two applications:

- Staff continues to work with the owner of Hospitality Creek, an existing campground, to resolve a number of violations that occurred on the parcel including clearing and the construction of an office/residential building. The campground is located in Monroe Township's Rural Development Area and is served by a septic system. The issue of most concern is the placement of 22 cabin buildings at 18 former campsites. The applicant feels that because the cabins are "park model" recreational vehicles, they do not require application to the Commission. Staff has outlined the information that must be submitted to deem the application complete.
- Staff is reviewing an application for the development of 293 dwelling units on a 37-acre parcel in Manchester Township's Regional Growth Area. Two T&E plants species were identified on the site. In order to avoid adverse impacts on the plant species, staff suggested creating two conservation areas that would need to be deed restricted.

Commission Lohbauer said battery energy storage facilities will allow windmills and solar facilities to be more effective by storing the generated energy until it is needed.

Gina Berg, Director of Land Use Programs, provided the following updates:

- The rules that were adopted by the Commission at its October meeting have been submitted to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL). The rule will be published in the New Jersey Register and will officially take effect on January 5, 2026.
- Staff has reviewed a draft communication plan, a draft water monitoring plan, and two sub-watershed restoration plans from the Barnegat Bay Partnership. No issues of concern were identified.
- Staff participated in a training session hosted by the NJDEP for real estate appraisers involved in land acquisition projects. Staff will be meeting with staff from the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) to ensure that each agency's rules are understood. Staff will be sharing information on the Pinelands Development Credit (PDC) Program.

Stacey Roth, Chief, Legal and Legislative Affairs, shared the following updates:

- Staff is coordinating with the FAA on a potential project at the Atlantic City International Airport, which is managed by the South Jersey Transportation Authority. The proposal is for a multi-modal facility with railroad access. The development may require a new or amended Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).
- At this time, the Commission has not received a decision on the Kirkwood-Cohansey rule appeal.

Chief Planner Brad Lanute provided the following updates:

- Jackson Township submitted two ordinances last month (2025-47 and 2025-48) that have been introduced and scheduled for adoption in mid-December. Each ordinance establishes an affordable housing overlay zones within the Pinelands Area portion of the Township. Both ordinances are associated with the Township's Fourth Round Housing Element and Fair Share Plan. Based on a preliminary review, staff has identified concerns regarding the intensity of development permitted under the proposed overlay zones, particularly with regard to a site in the Pinelands Village of Cassville and at a site in the Township's Rural Development Area. Both overlays would permit inclusionary mixed use development with multifamily affordable housing at a net density of eight dwelling units per acre. This is particularly a problem in the Rural Development Area, where sewer is not permitted. Staff recently issued a letter to the Township outlining those concerns and requested submission of the municipal housing plan, which the Township has yet to submit.
- On December 1, 2025, the Commission received an application from AT&T seeking to amend its previously approved local communications facility plan to add a new cell tower site within the Village of Chatsworth in Woodland Township. The CMP has extensive rules regulating the siting of wireless communication towers in most of the Pinelands

Area. The Commission has not received a plan amendment for a new site in the Pinelands since 2013. To support this review, the Commission has retained a Radio Frequency Engineer, with costs covered by an escrow funded by the applicant. The review process will include a public hearing, which has not yet been scheduled. Staff anticipates presenting findings to the Policy and Implementation Committee in February 2026, and to the full Commission in March 2026.

#### Public Development Projects and Other Permit Matters

Vice Chair Avery introduced a resolution recommending approval of three public development applications: the construction of a 2,578 square foot maintenance building at Shawnee High School, the construction of a 170-foot-tall communication tower in Manchester and paving of 1,875 linear feet within the 16<sup>th</sup> Street right-of-way in Estell Manor.

Commissioner Lohbauer made a motion Approving With Conditions Applications for Public Development (Application Numbers 1987-0345.022, 2021-0084.002 & 2025-0121.001) (See Resolution # PC4-25-33). Commissioner Pikolycky seconded the motion.

Commissioner Mauriello asked if staff conducted a secondary impacts review for the paving of the right-of-way in Estell Manor.

Director Horner said 16<sup>th</sup> Street is currently a gravel road that the town is proposing to partially pave to serve a few existing single family dwellings. He said the project may generate additional development on the street but all such development would require an application to the Commission and have to meet the standards of the CMP (see attached aerial of the project).

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 10 to 0.

#### Public Comment on Development Applications and Items Where the Record is Open

Vice Chair Avery read the list of public development applications. No one from the public provided comment.

#### Ordinances Not Requiring Commission Action

Chief Planner Lanute said in the past month staff reviewed four ordinances that raised no substantial issue with respect to the CMP. He said one was related to a cannabis ordinance in Egg Harbor City. He said another ordinance from Plumsted Township was related to subdivision approvals. Shamong Township adopted two ordinances related to tree removal and replacement.

#### Other Resolutions

Vice Chair Avery introduced a resolution to schedule monthly Commission meeting dates in 2026.

Commissioner Pikolycky made a motion Scheduling Regular Pinelands Commission Meeting Dates for 2026 (See Resolution # PC4-25-34). Commissioner Lohbauer seconded the motion.

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 10 to 0.

### General Public Comment

Heidi Yeh of the Pinelands Alliance said she supports the need to further investigate where battery storage facilities should be permitted. She said not only will battery storage facilities increase the resiliency of the grid, but they will also prepare the grid for storing energy generated from solar and wind. She said she recently toured a farm in New Jersey that was piloting the use of agrivoltaics and learned that only 1/3rd of the energy generated from the solar is actually being used. She said very expensive upgrades would be necessary at the substation in order for it to accept the energy that is generated from the farm. She said those funds were not part of the grant application. She thanked the P&I Committee for its recent discussion on artificial turf and for the concerns raised during the meeting. She said these types of discussions are not happening at the local level. She shared a situation that happened in Southampton Township where a turf field was included in a large spending package. She said the public is relying on the Pinelands Commission to raise and prioritize the environmental impacts of artificial turf fields.

Ed McGlinchey, former Pinelands Commissioner, said it was a great honor to serve as a Commissioner when he was chosen to serve by Camden County. He said he did his best to serve this Commission by attending meetings. He said it's evident from the continued absence of a certain Commissioner that they no longer wish to serve on this Commission. He suggested that they resign to provide the opportunity for someone else to serve. He said the Pinelands covers 25% of the state and is the largest protected area on the Atlantic seaboard. He said the Governor's office should ensure that the people it appoints wish to serve and will be active at the Commission meetings.

Matt DeNafo of Waterford Township said he has questions related to how the Commission handles cannabis facilities in Agricultural districts. He said Waterford's current ordinance allows unlimited licenses. He referred to a proposed 150,000 square foot grow facility with nine letters of support and questioned the role of the Right to Farm Act.

Vice Chair Avery said the Commission does not typically engage in responses to questions raised during public comment; however, the Directory of Regulatory Programs will provide a brief response, and Mr. DeNafo can get in contact with staff after the meeting.

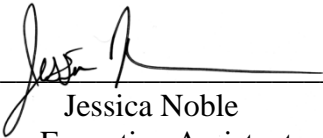
Director Horner said that the growing of cannabis is viewed by the Commission as any other agricultural crop. The growing of cannabis is permitted in the Agricultural Production Area. He noted that the exclusive growing of cannabis indoors is considered agriculture and permitted in the Agricultural Production Area. He stated that there is a provision in the Right to Farm Act that specifically states it does not supersede state regulations. That means that the Commission's regulations are not superseded by the Right to Farm Act.

Adjournment

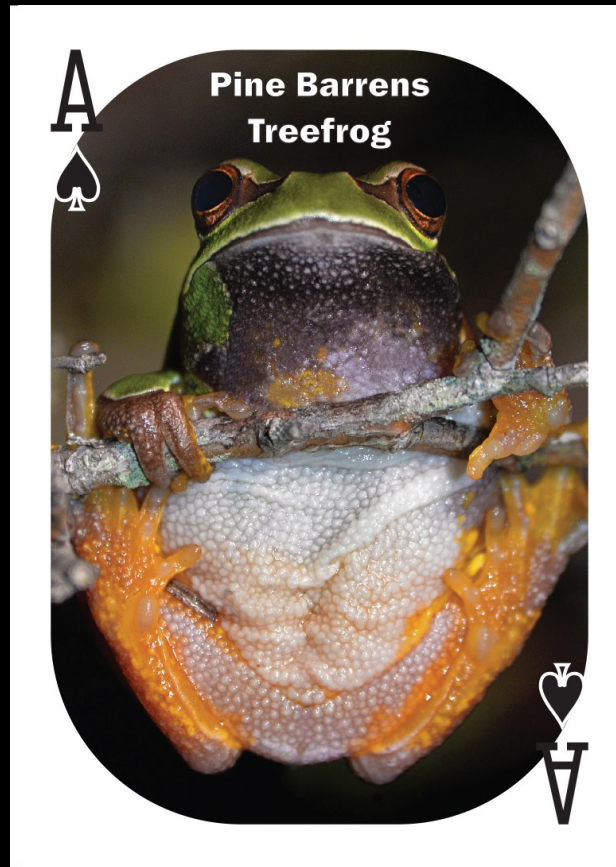
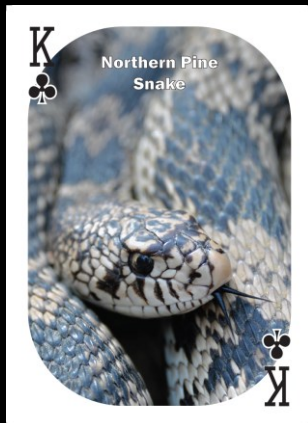
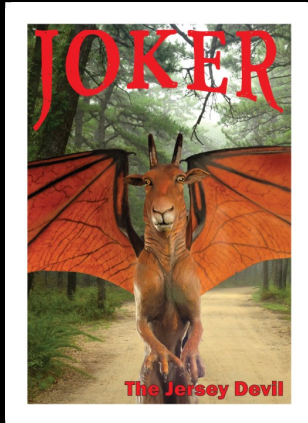
Vice Chair Avery said Merry Christmas, Happy Holiday and Happy New Year.

Commissioner Pikolycky moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Lohbauer seconded the motion. The Commission agreed to adjourn at 10:14 a.m.

Certified as true and correct:

  
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Jessica Noble  
Executive Assistant

Date: December 16, 2025



# New Pinelands Merchandise

December 12, 2025



# New Pinelands-themed refrigerator magnets

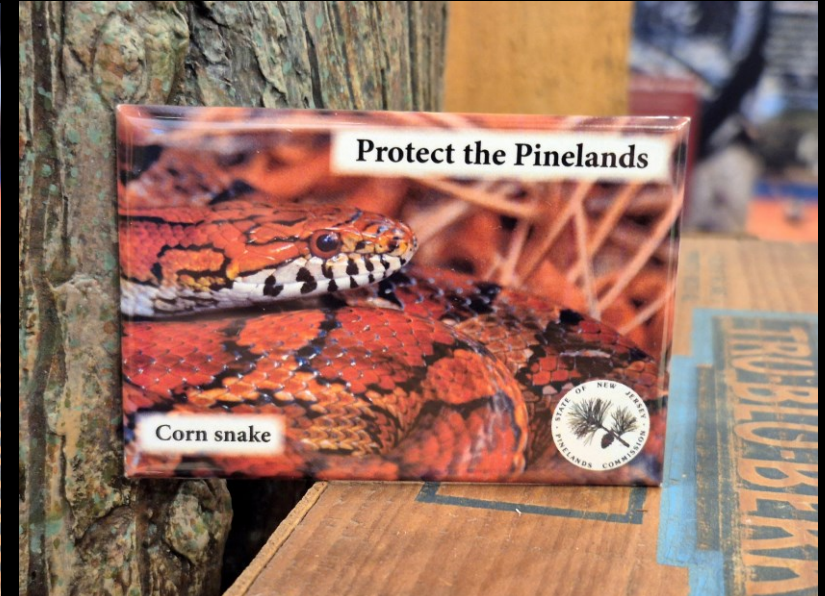
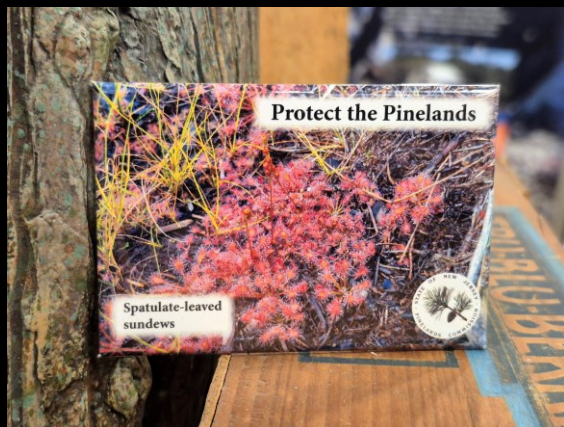


- Four different designs
- Museum-store quality
  - Strong magnet
- Measure 2 1/8" x 3 1/8"
- Made in the USA by Harmony Designs (same producer of Pinelands mugs)
- \$6 per magnet or \$20 for four





Back of magnet



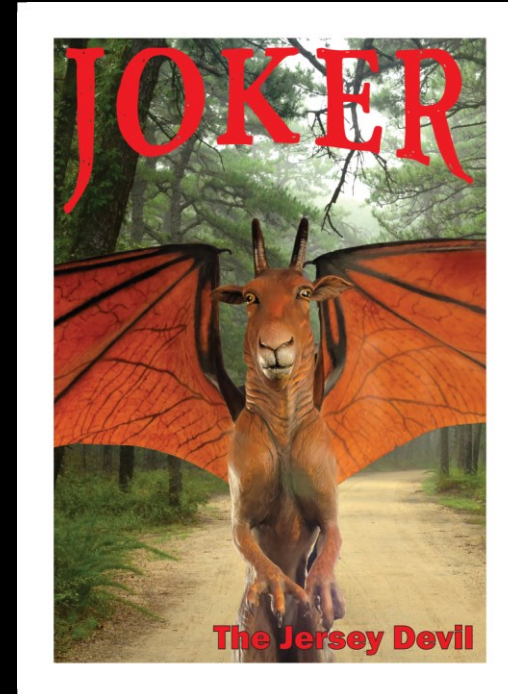
### **Pinelands Magnet Designs:**

**Blueberries & Cranberries, The Jersey Devil, Corn Snake and Spatulate-leaved Sundews**

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# New Pinelands-themed Playing Cards

- Boast 53 different plant and animal species, including the Jersey Devil as the two Joker cards
- All photos by Pinelands Commission staff
- Designed by Commission staff and made in the USA by the United States Playing Card Company (makers of Hoyle and Bicycle Brand playing cards). In business since 1885.
- \$15 per deck







K♦

Corn Snake



♦K

3♦

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher



♦3

8♣



Sweetbay Magnolia

♣8

A♦

Southern Leopard Frog



♦A



Q♠

Common Snapping  
Turtle



♠Q

7♥

Sheep Laurel



♥7

6♥

White Fringed  
Orchid



♥9

A♠

Pine Barrens  
Treefrog



♠A

7



Mountain Laurel



7

2



Spicebush  
Swallowtail Butterfly  
Caterpillar



2

J



Pitcher Plant



J

K



Eastern  
Kingsnake



K









All proceeds from sales of Pinelands merchandise will benefit the Kathleen M. Lynch-van de Sande Fund for native plantings in the New Jersey Pinelands.



