

Disclaimer

These minutes reflect the actions taken by the Commission during its January 10, 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 January 14, 2025.

PINELANDS COMMISSION MEETING

MINUTES
January 10, 2025

All participants were either in-person or present via Zoom conference and the meeting was livestreamed through YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EeKMv5V6KR0>

Commissioners Participating in the Meeting

Nicholas Asselta, Alan W. Avery Jr., Deborah Buzby-Cope, Dan Christy, John Holroyd, Jerome H. Irick, Mark Lohbauer, Mark Mauriello, William Pikolycky, Jessica Rittler Sanchez, Douglas Wallner and Chair Laura E. Matos. Also participating were Executive Director Susan R. Grogan, Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Jay Stypinski and Governor's Authorities Unit representative Alexis Franklin.

Commissioners Absent

Theresa Lettman and Jonathan Meade.

Call to Order

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

DAG Stypinski read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement (OPMA).

DAG Stypinski administered the oath of office to Deborah Buzby-Cope, who will serve as a gubernatorial appointee.

Commissioner Buzby-Cope said she is honored to serve on the Commission and is looking forward to the new role. She said she is familiar with the Commission's work in her former elected official capacity for Bass River Township.

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

The Commission pledged allegiance to the Flag.

Minutes

Chair Matos presented the open and closed session minutes from the Commission's December 13, 2024 meeting. Commissioner Irick moved the adoption of the minutes. Commissioner Lohbauer seconded the motion.

The minutes from the December 13, 2024 Commission meeting were adopted by a vote of 11 to 0. Commissioner Buzby-Cope abstained from the vote.

Executive Director's Report

ED Grogan provided information on the following matters:

- At the December 13th meeting, the Commission authorized the signing of Collective Negotiation Agreements with the Communications Workers of America (CWA). The agreements were signed early this week after expiration of the Governor's veto period for the meeting minutes. Staff is currently calculating the retroactive salary increases and has scheduled a special open enrollment period that will occur next week for employees who wish to switch their health insurance plans. She said it's good news to have the collective bargaining process complete.
- The Fenwick Manor Rehabilitation project has experienced a setback. After working for approximately a year with the Division of Property Management and Construction, an obstacle has arisen and will result in Commission staff having to redraft a Request for Proposal and manage the contract. The delay is unfortunate and will ultimately increase the cost of the project. It may be necessary to request additional funding for the project.

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

- Hamilton Township completed an application for a soil cap on its closed landfill and the development of solar energy facility. A threatened and endangered (T&E) species survey determined the presence of a T&E species. Staff provided guidance to the applicant on revising its plan while maintaining consistency with the T&E standards. Staff met with municipal employees, elected officials and the applicant in mid-December to ensure that everyone understood the issues. Soon after that meeting, the applicant submitted a plan

depicting the suggested forested corridors to protect the T&E species. This application will be scheduled for Commission action in the coming months.

Stacey Roth, Chief, Legal and Legislative Affairs, said a complaint was filed against Artistic Materials located in Southampton Township on January 2nd. She said for years, the property owner has been in violation of its Pinelands Development Credit (PDC) deed restriction and the Comprehensive Management Plan's (CMP) wetlands standards. Commission staff has been working closely with the Attorney General's office for quite some time because the CMP does not provide the Commission with direct enforcement authority. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), the holder of the PDC deed restriction, has joined the litigation. The property owner has 35 days to file an Answer to the complaint.

Gina Berg, Director of Land Use Programs, provided an update on the following matters:

- Staff is currently planning the 3rd annual Permanent Land Preservation Summit, which will be held in late March or April. A possible theme for the Summit may be accessible trails.
- A Planning Specialist has been hired and their start date is January 27th.
- Staff will be meeting to discuss necessary changes to the National Park Service (NPS) workplan.

Brad Lanute, Chief Planner, reviewed upcoming agenda items for the January 31st Policy and Implementation Committee meeting:

- Staff will report on a Master Plan and Ordinance from Berlin Township regarding a proposed management area change, and an ordinance from Barnegat Township amending an existing Regional Growth Area zone.
- Staff will also provide two presentations: an overview of the updated Preliminary State Plan, the Cross-acceptance process, and their relationship to the Pinelands; and trends seen in 2024 as they relate to municipal conformance.

Paul Leakan, Communications Officer, said the 36th annual Pinelands Short Course will be held at Stockton University on March 8th, and it will feature 37 presentations, including 24 new programs. He said Commissioners are invited to attend the event at no cost.

He said later today, Commission staff will be leading a tour of the Pinelands for visitors from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), including a delegation from New York and France, along with NYC chef Daniel Humm.

He said the Commission oversees the Pinelands biosphere reserve, and the U.S. Biosphere program contacted staff late last week to see if we could lead a tour of farms for the chef and the delegation, in order to learn about and discuss a biosphere reserve's role in sustaining environmentally sound farming and the production of local food. A local farm has agreed to take our group on a guided bus tour of their farm and adjacent Whitesbog Village, which is the

birthplace of the cultivated highbush blueberry. The tour will end with a visit to the Pinelands Preservation Alliance's Rancocas Creek farm, which is chemical-free.

Public Development Projects and Other Permit Matters

Chair Matos introduced a resolution for the installation of a pedestrian walkway at Stockton University.

Commissioner Irick made a motion Approving With Conditions an Application for Public Development (Application Number 1981-1833.080)(See Resolution # PC4-25-01). Commissioner Lohbauer seconded the motion.

Director Horner said Stockton University is proposing concrete walkways at its Galloway campus. He noted that the public development report provides an overview of a conservation deed restriction associated with a 2015 Memorandum of Agreement. He said Stockton University is in the final steps in the process of recording a revised conservation deed restriction that will remove certain existing development from the deed restricted conservation areas. The pedestrian walkways are not located in the deed restricted areas.

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 12 to 0.

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

Director Horner briefly described the three projects up for comment:

- Replacement of a sanitary sewer pumping station at Stockton University;
- Construction of an elevated potable water storage tank in Barnegat Township; and
- Installation of 2,000 linear feet of road improvements in the City of Estell Manor

No one from the public offered comment on these applications.

Ordinances Not Requiring Commission Action

Chief Planner Lanute said the Land Use Programs office reviewed 11 ordinances in December that raised no substantial issues with respect to the CMP. The memo included in the meeting packet provides descriptions of the ordinances.

He noted that ordinances from Chesilhurst Borough and Mullica Township implemented the 2023 CMP amendments related to the Kirkwood-Cohansey rule.

Lastly, he said staff worked with Stafford Township to resolve a zoning map error dating back to at least 2008. The issue arose during the review of an application for a single-family dwelling in the Township's Regional Growth Area. Although the site was on a street with many existing single-family homes, it and surrounding properties were mistakenly zoned for Recreation and Open Space, affecting the property owner's ability to obtain approvals.

General Public Comment

Mark Thomas of New Lisbon, NJ, said he is the founder of the Rancocas Conservancy, the Land Trust for the Rancocas Creek. He said a group of volunteers preserved and/or manage 2,500 acres. He said changing the Black Run Preserve from a Rural Development Area to a Forest Area is a very important matter. He said the Black Run Preserve is in the Rancocas Creek watershed and water coming in from Voorhees and Berlin wrap around the Black Run. He urged the Commission to make the Management Area change. He said he is dedicated to the Rancocas Creek Watershed, expressed gratitude for the Commission's work and offered assistance regarding the rehabilitation of Fenwick Manor.

Fred Akers of the Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association welcomed Dr. Buzby-Cope to the Commission. He said the NJDEP issued the 2024 State Water Supply Plan, and the report determined that some areas in the Pinelands, specifically the HUC 11 Great Egg Harbor River, has stressed groundwater supply values. He said the Commission recently amended the CMP to protect the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer. A golf course in Winslow Township has applied for a 225% increase of its water allocation permit. He said the NJDEP is scheduled to grant the permit and that action could be devastating to the Pinelands ecology. He said there needs to be better coordination when an applicant is requesting an increase to its water allocation permit in the Pinelands Area given the current conditions of climate change, drought concerns and potential for increased water usage. He noted the story of the Berlin well. See attached handout.

John Volpa, Evesham Township, NJ, said the Aerohaven section of the Black Run Preserve serves as connector for wildlife but has sustained damage from illegal ORV activity. He said this area should be considered for restoration as part of the accessible trails MOA now under consideration between the Commission and Evesham Township. See attached written comments.

Bob Smith, Turnersville, NJ, said he is an attorney and has been doing Pinelands work for approximately 20 years. He questioned the Commission on a change in policy related to applicants' ability to speak directly to the Commission's Environmental Specialists.

Chair Matos said that the public comment period is not a question-and-answer session. She said this is an opportunity for members of the public to provide comment.

Mr. Smith said a three-minute public comment limitation is ridiculous and he has never heard of such a thing in his long career. He said his post-retirement goal is to educate the Commission about what happens in the Regulatory Programs office. He said he has had a good working relationship with Commission staff for 20 years. He said he has not been able to talk to the Commission's Environmental Specialists during the past few months because the new policy seems to be "we will never talk to you". He noted that there has been some disagreement about OPRA with attorneys and warned this could result in the Commission's having to pay legal fees. He stated that he will be doing research and plans to bring others to future public meetings to voice their complaints.

He requested that Commissioner Asselta make a motion to extend the three-minute public comment period. Commissioner Asselta agreed to make the motion. No other Commissioners seconded the motion.

Heidi Yeh of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance (PPA) welcomed Commissioner Buzby-Cope. She provided a brief summary of what PPA does. She said PPA is concerned that the NJDEP is rubber-stamping the water allocation request for the golf course in Winslow Township. She said the applicant has demonstrated that there will be no net increase to its annual permit but will be pumping more during the drier months. She asked that the Commission staff share their expertise with the NJDEP on this matter since the water resources in the area are stressed.

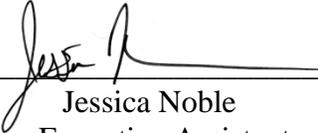
Commissioner Rittler Sanchez said she is concerned about the water allocation increase for the golf course.

ED Grogan said staff is aware of the application and will be coordinating with the NJDEP on the matter.

Adjournment

Commissioner Irick moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Lohbauer seconded the motion. The Commission agreed to adjourn at 10:17 a.m.

Certified as true and correct:



Jessica Noble
Executive Assistant

Date: January 14, 2025

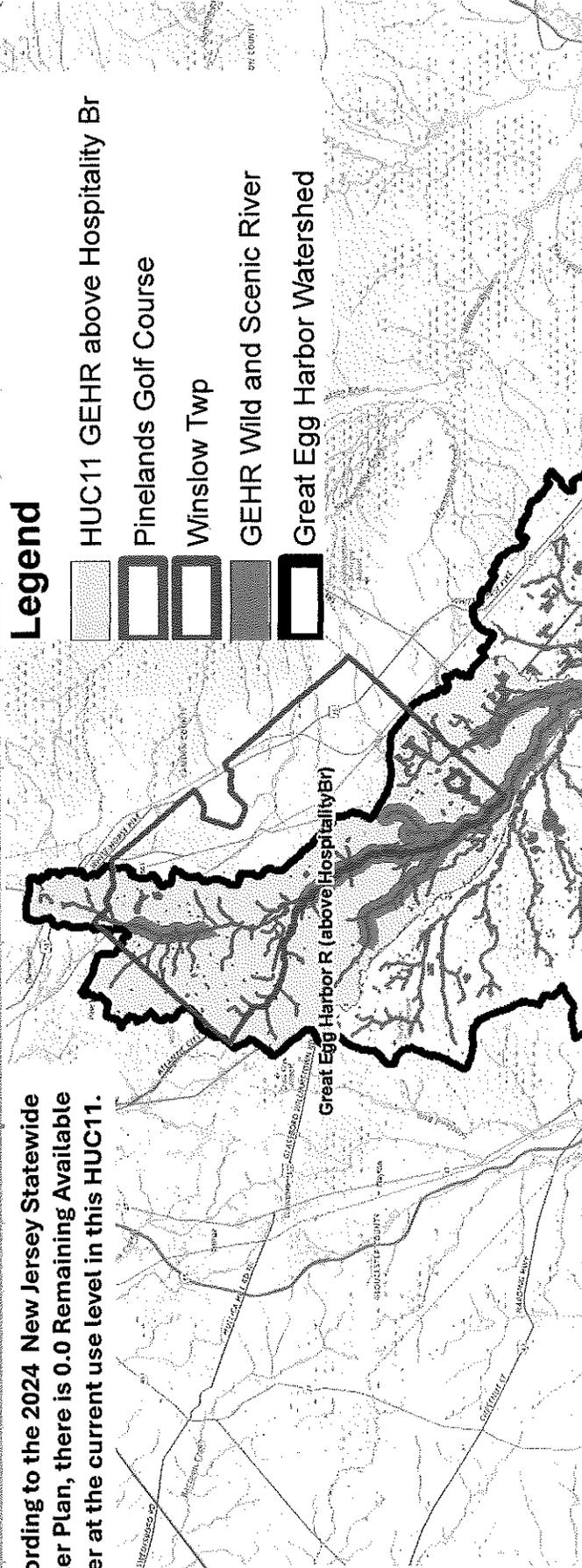
Table 15B. Summary of HUC11 Remaining Available Water and Full Allocation

DEP Value	HUC11	HUC11 Name	Peak Available Year With ⁵	Current			Full Allocation (F.A.)			Largest Dep-Con Loss			
				Net Dep-Con (mgd)	% Available Used	Remaining Available Water (mgd)	Net Dep-Con (mgd)	% Available Used	Remaining Available Water (mgd)	Largest Loss Current Use	Largest Loss F.A. Use	Largest Loss Available Water (F.A.)	
111	02040302050	Great Egg Harbor R (above HospitalityBr)	2018	5.9	131%	0.0	19.7	438%	0.0	Potable	82%	Potable	100%

According to the 2024 New Jersey Statewide Water Plan, there is 0.0 Remaining Available Water at the current use level in this HUC11.

Legend

-  HUC11 GEHR above Hospitality Br
-  Pinelands Golf Course
-  Winslow Twp
-  GEHR Wild and Scenic River
-  Great Egg Harbor Watershed



NJ DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, 9/30/02

Contact: Amy Cradic(609) 984-1795

DEP Takes Enforcement Action Against Golf Courses Violating Water Supply Act

Severe Drought Conditions Continue

(02/91) TRENTON – Reinforcing the vital need to adhere to drought emergency restrictions, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Commissioner Bradley M. Campbell today announced that seven golf courses have been fined for violating the state's Water Supply Management Act.

"New Jersey is still experiencing severe water shortfalls and conservation remains a critical responsibility of residents and businesses alike," said Commissioner Campbell. "We understand that golf courses and other industries have financial concerns as a result of drought restrictions, and we have worked to accommodate them when possible. However, ensuring the public an adequate supply of safe drinking water is our first priority."

Investigating compliance with water use restrictions, DEP issued Notices of Violation and penalties ranging from \$1,000 to \$50,000 to the following golf courses: Westlake Golf Course & Country Club, Jackson Township, Ocean County; Shore Oaks Golf Club, Howell Township, Monmouth County; Eagle Ridge Golf Course, Lakewood Township, Ocean County; Cohanzick Country Club, Bridgeton, Cumberland County; the Pinelands Golf Course, Winslow Township, Camden County; Running Deer Golf Course, Pittsgrove Township, Salem County, and the Buena Vista Country Club, Buena Vista Township, Atlantic County.

On March 11, 2002, DEP issued an Administrative Order prohibiting golf courses from using more than 50 percent of their monthly allocation of water under the department's Water Allocation Permit and Water Use Registration programs. In response to concerns raised by golf course operators, a subsequent order was issued on June 20, 2002 allowing golf courses to use 80 percent of their monthly water allocation.

As required under the Water Supply Management Act, any person who has the capability to draw 100,000 gallons of water per day must obtain a DEP issued Water Use Registration regardless of the amount they plan to use. For those entities that draw more than 100,000 gallons of water per day, they must obtain a Water Allocation Permit. The installation of flow meters is required as part of a Water Use Registration issued to golf courses in order to provide the department a record of their actual water usage.

Westlake Golf Course & Country Club has the capability to draw 100,000 gallons per day or more of water from its eight wells for irrigation. From September 1999 through October 2000, Westlake diverted 29.03 million gallons of water without obtaining a required Water Use Registration or

Water Allocation Permit. Westlake obtained a registration on November 17, 2000. In 2001, Westlake violated its Water Use Registration by drawing more than 100,000 gallons of water per day from May through October. Similar violations were committed during May and June in 2002. On August 5, 2002, a settlement agreement was reached between Westlake and the DEP in the amount of \$15,000. Westlake was issued a water allocation permit on August 16, 2002.

Shore Oaks Golf Club has the capability to draw more than 100,000 gallons of water per day from four wells and an onsite pond for irrigation. Shore Oaks diverted water from May 1992 through the present without a valid Water Use Registration or Water Allocation Permit from the department. On September 9, 2002, Shore Oaks and the DEP came to a settlement agreement in the amount of \$50,000, and has since applied for a Water Use Registration and Water Allocation Permit.

Eagle Ridge Golf Course has the capability to draw more than 100,000 gallons of water per day from four wells and an onsite pond for irrigation. Eagle Ridge diverted water from October 1999 through the present without a valid Water Use Registration or Water Allocation Permit from the department. On September 4, 2002, Eagle Ridge and the DEP came to a settlement agreement in the amount of \$25,000. Eagle Ridge has applied for a Water Use Registration.

The remaining four of the seven golf courses in violation were cited and fined for failure to install flowmeters on water diversion sources.

On July 11, 2002, an Administrative Order and Notice of Civil Administrative Penalty Assessment in the amount of \$4,000 was issued to Buena Vista Country Club. On the same date, Cohanzick Country Club was issued a \$1,000 penalty and the Pinelands Golf Course a \$3,000 penalty. To date, flow meters have been installed at each facility and settlement agreements have been reached.

In addition, on August 15, 2002, Running Deer Golf Course was fined \$3,000 for failing to install water meters on its water diversion sources. They have subsequently installed the required meters.



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

PHILIP D. MURPHY
GOVERNOR

TAHESHA L. WAY
LT. GOVERNOR

SHAWN M. LATOURETTE
COMMISSIONER

Mail Code 401-04Q
Division of Water Supply & Geoscience
New Jersey Geological and Water Survey Element
Bureau of Water Allocation & Well Permitting
401 E. State Street - P.O. Box 420
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0420
Tel #: (609) 984-6831 - Fax #: (609) 633-1231
<https://www.nj.gov/dep/watersupply/>

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

IN THE MATTER OF: PINELANDS GOLF COURSE

Application No. 2278P to divert water from 4 wells and 1 pond intake in Winslow Township, Camden County.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING, DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, DIVISION OF WATER SUPPLY & GEOSCIENCE, TRENTON, NEW JERSEY. Pursuant to provisions of the Water Supply Management Act, N.J.S.A. 58:1A-1 *et seq.*, PINELANDS GOLF COURSE, 887 S Mays Landing Road, Winslow Township, NJ, 08037, filed an application on March 7, 2023 for approval of plans to divert 7 million gallons of water per month (MGM) and 33.48 million gallons of water per year, at a maximum rate of 1000 gallons per minute (GPM) from 4 wells, 85 to 100 feet deep completed in the Kirkwood-Cohansey Formation and 1 pond intake. This request represents an increase of 3.9 MGM and 500 GPM above the current limits of Water Use Registration 10940W with the addition of three existing small capacity wells and a 500 GPM increase in the pond intake capacity. The wells and intake are located in Winslow Township, Camden County off of Mays Landing Road. The diversion is to be used for golf course irrigation, public non-community supply and maintenance.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT a public hearing has been scheduled on Wednesday, January 15th, 2025, at 10:00 A.M. The hearing will be conducted virtually through the Department's video conferencing software (Microsoft Teams). A link to the virtual public hearing will be provided on the Division of Water Supply and Geoscience website, <https://nj.gov/dep/watersupply> under the "What's New" section. The hearing is being held to afford the public an opportunity to be heard on this application. Pursuant to the provisions of the Water Supply Management Act, N.J.S.A. 58:1A-1 *et seq.*, and the regulations promulgated pursuant thereto at N.J.A.C. 7:19 *et seq.*, this public hearing shall be held before a Hearing Officer for the Division of Water Supply & Geoscience. The applicant and other interested persons will have the opportunity to present and submit information and comment in favor of or in opposition to the application. The applicant and other interested persons may each be represented by counsel, but this is not required. In response to this notice, any person may submit written comments in favor of or in opposition to approval of the application until close of business on the date of the public hearing to: catherine.foley@dep.nj.gov.

If you are interested in providing oral testimony at the virtual public hearing, please email the Department at catherine.foley@dep.nj.gov no later than 12:00 P.M. Tuesday, January 14th, 2025, with your contact information (name, organization, telephone number, and email address). Please note that the Department will be recording the hearing.

The Department encourages electronic submittal of comments to catherine.foley@dep.nj.gov. In

the alternative, comments may be submitted on paper to:

Catherine Foley
Mail Code 401-04Q
Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Water Supply & Geoscience
P.O. Box 420
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0420

The Hearing Officer shall have reasonable discretion in holding the hearing record open after the public hearing to receive written comments relative to the application and to allow the applicant to correct deficiencies in its application and respond to comments received at the public hearing.

After the close of the hearing record, the Hearing Officer, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:19-2.11, shall review the application, written comments and the transcript of the public hearing and submit a written report containing findings and recommendations to the Decision Maker for a final decision on the application.

The application and pertinent data may be examined by appointment only, by contacting Catherine Foley of the Bureau of Water Allocation & Well Permitting, Division of Water Supply & Geoscience, 401 E. State Street, Trenton, New Jersey 08625. The Bureau of Water Allocation & Well Permitting can be contacted at (609) 984-6831.

BY ORDER OF THE DIVISION OF WATER SUPPLY & GEOSCIENCE



PINELANDS PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

Protecting and Exploring New Jersey's Pine Barrens

Protection | Ecology | Exploration | History & Society | Teachers & Students | Support PPA

RETURN HOME

Protection

Past Major Campaigns
The Berlin Well



Support
PPA

Help Protect the
Pinelands!

DONATE ➔

Volunteer today

The Berlin Well

The story of the Berlin Well is a lesson in the problem of boundaries. You have to address what is happening inside and outside the Pinelands boundaries if you want to protect this unique ecosystem. This story also demonstrates that PPA and a group of committed citizens really can make a difference.

A Historical Overview

In 1997 a new well was constructed, just outside of the Pinelands boundaries, to provide water to thousands of Camden County residents. Berlin Well #12 was only 84 feet deep and pumped water from the shallow Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer. The water level in this aquifer is a few feet beneath the ground surface in most areas of the Pinelands. It is for this reason that the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer is the lifeblood of New Jersey's Pinelands, providing over 90% of the water you see in its wetlands, streams and rivers.

Berlin Well #12 started pumping water in 1997 but that same year the \$2 million facility was shut down because it produced water with a bad smell and bad taste. It was determined that bacteria from wetlands located just 750 feet from the well had caused the water quality problems. This was the first indication that the well was stealing water from the nearby wetlands.

In June 2000, after an expensive filtration system was installed to correct the odor problem, the Well was turned on and began pumping 450 gallons a minute from the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer. That same month residents of Marlton Lakes noticed that Kettle Run, a primary feeder stream for the lake system in Evesham Township, was drying up. This stream, closest to the Well, would flow briefly after thunderstorms but within a few days it would dry up along with the surrounding wetlands. This was a new phenomenon,

something that residents had never experienced before. These wetlands are home to some amazing plant and animal life, including the federally threatened Swamp Pink. The Well was located just outside the Pinelands boundaries but the dramatic, detrimental effects were seen within the boundaries.

Time to Take Action

A small group of private citizens, led by PPA took action. PPA helped residents to press the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for tests and action on the well. PPA staff obtained records showing Berlin Borough and DEP anticipated the impact on Kettle Run wetlands, but approved the well anyway. PPA was able to help residents sort through the volumes of technical information and find information buried in DEP files. Recognizing the unique opportunity to shape future water supply policy to protect wetlands and aquatic habitat, PPA requested a formal hearing to present detailed information supporting the claim that the well should be turned off.. permanently.



(c) 2004 Berlin Well © PPA

All's Well that ends Well

In June 2001, with test results showing the well was draining the wetlands, DEP instructed Berlin to turn the well off and find another source of municipal water. This was a major victory for the environment and residents of Marlton Lakes! Any reduction in water flowing into the lakes would have been a serious problem since the bacteria levels in the lakes would have risen, and could have resulted in beach closings. This was a situation where the environment and the quality of life for residents of a lake community was in jeopardy.

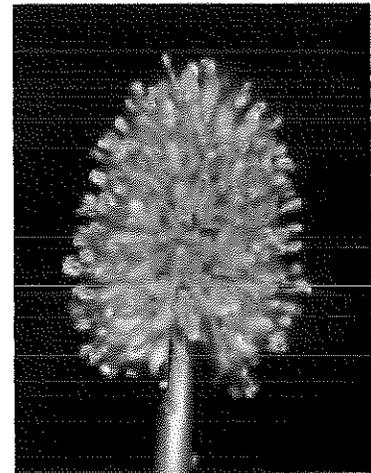
Why it was Worth the Fight

This was the first time PPA is aware of, that the DEP shut down a well because of concerns for threatened and endangered species, in this case the federally threatened Swamp Pink.

Shortly after the Berlin Well was closed a similar problem cropped up in Crestwood Village, located in the Pinelands. In 2002 the Crestwood Village Water Company requested that it be allowed to remove an additional 95 million gallons of groundwater per year from the shallow aquifer beneath Whiting, NJ in order to support more development. At the time all of their wells were located in the shallow Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer. The water company's own consultants admitted that this would reduce the flow of water in a number of local streams and wetlands within the Barnegat Bay Watershed.

Using the Berlin Well case as an example of a flawed water supply policy that does little to protect the environment, PPA requested a formal hearing and packed the hearing with over 300 residents. After presenting detailed comments and subsequent meetings with the DEP and water company, the original plan to take water from the shallow aquifer was scrapped. The water company agreed to install a very deep well, one that would not impact wetlands or streams. Because of PPA efforts, the Pinelands Commission also officially opposed the request for additional water at the hearing.

This the first time that one state agency (the Pinelands Commission) asked another state agency (DEP) to turn down a water allocation request due to environmental impacts. After the Berlin Well and Crestwood Village issues the DEP changed how they looked at requests to remove water from the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer. Prior to this, their main concern was whether or not a new well or water permit would impact other human users. In 2005 they began requiring more monitoring of the environmental impacts of new or increased water allocation requests.



(+ ZOOM) Swamp Pink, small version ©Michael Hogan

Pinelands Commission Meeting
1-10-25
BRP Aerohaven Section

John Volpa, Founder of the Black Run Preserve, speaking as a private citizen and resident of Evesham Township.

As the Commission continues to consider a Headwaters amendment to the CMP, I speak today to bring your attention first to the East-West Connector. This region connects the Black Run Preserve's Aerohaven section with lands on the east and west sides of Hopewell Road. The Evesham Township OSRP describes the area: "This land is largely forested wetlands, but area west of Hopewell Road, is upland coniferous forest. Both types of habitats have documented occurrences of endangered and threatened species. **it has** high priority for protection because it allows movement of wildlife between two critical regions in southern Evesham that are high integrity lands. It especially prevents the Aerohaven property and the adjacent preserved Black Run Preserve, as well as the Evesham Headwaters Area, from becoming isolated from other Pinelands habitat." ... " **Forested** uplands within this Area are important to protect because of their high biodiversity value." (Evesham Township Open Space & Recreation Plan 2023. pp 73 & 74 Section: 6.1.5 Land Preservation and Protection)

In 2006, the Evesham-Medford Sub-Regional Resource Protection Plan (SRRPP) recommended expanding protection and preservation of forest areas straddling Medford and Evesham, basically the East/West Connector. The Protection Plan recognized that the expansion of this forest Area "will create an open space corridor that will extend from the Wharton State Forest tract, through both municipalities." (p. 20) "Maintenance of uninterrupted, undisturbed forests is necessary to support many rare plant and animal populations. Connection of these forests also helps maintain regional biodiversity."

Both documents stress the maintenance of biodiversity in the corridor of which the Aerohaven Section of the BRP is a keystone parcel, yet due to illegal ORV use, most of the Aerohaven property is denuded sugar sand. If the land were actively restored, then in perhaps 20-30 years we'd have a true Pine Barrens landscape that supports the flow of greater biodiversity.

As the PC continues to develop a MOA for the BRP, it appears that the existing Aerohaven trails, will be closed, but perhaps "the Peaceful Partners Trail could remain"* and hopefully the decades of illegal ORV use in Aerohaven will be stopped.

Therefore, I respectfully request that a framework for future restoration projects be included in the developing MOA between the PC and Evesham Township. Last June, PPA's hosted a Climate Conference. From the expert presenters I gleaned some recommendations specific to Aerohaven then shared them with the Evesham Township Environmental Commission. I'd be please to share that information with the PC.