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For Immediate Release

New Pinelands Summer Short Course offers guided nature hikes, history and blueberry tours, a Batsto River canoe trip, live music and presentations on winemaking, butterflies and the American Revolution

NEW LISBON, N.J., May 17, 2017 – The first-ever Pinelands Summer Short Course will feature six field trips and a day of educational programs that showcase the region's history, ecology, culture and music.

Registration is now open for the event, which will be held at Stockton University's Kramer Hall on 30 Front Street in downtown Hammonton on July 27, 2017. The event is co-sponsored by the New Jersey Pinelands Commission and Stockton University.

"The Pinelands Commission has held the Pinelands Short Course in early March for the past 28 years, and the event is thriving," said Nancy Wittenberg, the Commission's Executive Director. "While we will continue to hold the regular Short Course in March, we felt it was important to create a new tradition that enables the public to explore the Pinelands during the peak of summer, when wildlife abounds."

"Stockton is very pleased that members of the year-round community and summer visitors alike will be able to explore more of our region's history, culture and ecology this July, both in Kramer Hall, the university's location in Hammonton, and in the surrounding area, which is rich in natural beauty and historic sites," said Stockton President Harvey Kesselman.

The Summer Short Course will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Attendees should check in at Kramer Hall between 8 a.m. and 8:45 a.m. A free continental breakfast will be offered to attendees, beginning at 8 a.m.

The event will feature the following programs:

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- **A two-hour, guided tour of the Atlantic Blueberry Company's commercial farm in Hammonton:** Attendees will get the full farm experience as they tour the Atlantic Blueberry Company's processing and packing plant on Weymouth Road. After the tour of the plant, attendees will load a labor bus that will transport them to the expansive fields to see and sample different varieties of blueberries.
- **A full-day, guided canoe trip along the Batsto River, with a focus on plant life:** Ryan Rebozo, Ph.D. Director of Conservation Science at the Pinelands Preservation Alliance, and Jean Montgomerie, Environmental Specialist with the Pinelands Commission, will lead a canoe trip along the Batsto River. The trip will start on the Batsto River at Quaker Bridge and end at Batsto Lake. Participants will make several stops to investigate and learn about Pinelands plants growing along the river's edge.
- **A full-day van tour focusing on the traditional industries in the Pinelands:** Guide Jeff Larson, who has been exploring the Pinelands for three decades, will lead a five-hour van tour that will highlight past industries in the Pinelands. Participants will learn about Piney culture and history while making several stops to see places such as Hampton Furnace and other areas where traditional industries once thrived in the Pinelands but have since been reclaimed by the forest.
- **A full-day hike between the Mullica and Batsto rivers:** Naturalist John Volpa will lead a daylong, four-mile hike along the Mullica and Batsto rivers. Attendees will walk along the uplands and edges of the two rivers while seeing and learning about native plants and animals, as well as other unique features in the Pinelands.
- **A two-hour, guided walk of Hammonton's historic downtown:** Angela Donio, Chairperson of the Historic Preservation Commission of Hammonton, will lead a two-hour walk of downtown Hammonton. Participants will stroll through Hammonton's Business District and Historic Bellevue- Packard-Grape-Central Residential District as Donio shares historic photographs of the area while telling interesting tales of the years gone by.
- **A two-hour, guided walk at Batsto Lake, with a focus on dragonflies and damselflies:** Attendees will venture to Batsto Lake to learn about the fascinating diversity and behavior of Pinelands dragonflies and damselflies. Jennifer Bulava, Park Naturalist at Burlington County Parks, and Gil Mika, Park Naturalist at Wharton State Forest, will lead the two-hour walk, which will also include a stop at the Annie M. Carter Interpretive Center at Batsto.
- **A two-hour presentation that highlights the history of winemaking in New Jersey:** New Jersey has been a vibrant place for winemaking since the Colonial days. Tom Consentino, Executive Director of the Garden State Wine Growers Association, will delve into the state's history of winemaking, covering the early founders of the industry, the establishment of Renault Winery in the Pinelands, the effects of prohibition, the current state of winemaking and future plans for the industry's growth.

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- **A 75-minute presentation on butterflies and moths:** Jen Bulava, Park Naturalist at Burlington County Parks, will provide a photographic overview of butterflies and conspicuous moths of the Pinelands. Attendees will learn about behaviors, habitats, food sources and insect identification.
- **A 75-minute presentation on the Battle of Chestnut Neck:** Historian Norman Goos will highlight the Revolutionary War battle that was fought at Chestnut Neck, a settlement on the Little Egg Harbor River in present-day Port Republic City.
- **A 75-minute presentation on the health benefits of blueberries:** Amy Howell, an Associate Research Scientist with Rutgers University, will present new research into the health benefits of consuming blueberries. Attendees will learn about the many benefits of eating blueberries and how the beneficial compounds in the berries work in the human body.
- **A 75-minute presentation on the domestication on the highbush blueberry:** New Jersey is among the top producers of blueberries in the United States, with most of the production occurring in the Pinelands. Nicholi Vorsa, Director of Rutgers University's Marucci Center for Blueberry and Cranberry Research and Extension, will provide details on the domestication of highbush blueberries and how native blueberry plants from the Pinelands contributed to the genetic base of currently grown cultivars.
- **A 75-minute presentation on agriculture in the Pinelands:** Agriculture has long been a vital industry in the New Jersey Pinelands. Keely Ditizio of Salem County Vocational Technical High School will deliver a hands-on presentation focusing on the unique soils and ecology in the Pinelands. Attendees will also learn about the history of agriculture in the Pinelands.
- **A 45-minute, live musical performance:** Attendees will hear a live performance by New Jersey native Gabe Coia, who is a singer, songwriter, guitarist and musical composer. His 2016 album, "The Pines of My Past," features 11 original songs that celebrate the history, folklore, and ecology of the Pinelands.

Space is limited, so it is critical for participants to register early, as the event may sell out.

The Pinelands Short Course is registered with the New Jersey Department of Education, and professional development credits are available to New Jersey teachers who attend. Registration is \$60 per person.

For more information about the courses, please call (609) 894-7300, ext. 125. Full course descriptions are available on the Commission's website: www.nj.gov/pinelands.

To register online, please visit www.stockton.edu/pinelands. To register by phone, please call (609) 652-4227, Monday - Thursday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

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