



New Jersey Pinelands Commission **PRESS RELEASE**

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New Jersey Pinelands Commission approves \$2.1 million expenditure to preserve more than 600 acres in Camden and Ocean counties

Money to be disbursed from the Pinelands Conservation Fund

NEW LISBON, N.J. – The New Jersey Pinelands Commission’s Permanent Land Protection Committee has dedicated more than \$2.1 million to preserve 602 acres in Camden and Ocean counties in the Pinelands. During its meeting today, the Committee approved the expenditure from the Pinelands Conservation Fund to preserve the land in partnership with local governments and nonprofit organizations.

“The permanent protection of land is among the most powerful tools to ensure the preservation of the Pinelands and its unique resources,” said John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission. “These properties warrant permanent protection because they connect adjacent properties that are already preserved, which creates a large, contiguous area of undisturbed land. Some properties also contain important habitat for rare Pinelands plants and animals such as northern pine snakes and timber rattlesnakes.”

The Permanent Land Protection Committee approved funding for the preservation of six properties in multiple planning areas that it has deemed to have significant environmental resources. The funding is contingent upon the execution of a purchase contract, supported by a certification of fair market value, by June 1, 2009. These areas include:

■ **The Forest and Rural Development Areas of Winslow Township, Camden County:** (one property totaling 78 acres, up to \$160,050 allocated to the Camden County Improvement Authority; **Requires concurrent approval by the Pinelands Commission**);

■ **The Forked River Mountain Area in Ocean Township** (two projects totaling 236 acres, up to \$199,800 allocated to the Ocean County Natural Lands Trust and up to \$533,333 allocated to the Trust for Public Land);

■ **The Toms River Sub-Regional Planning Area in Jackson, Manchester and Toms River townships** (two projects totaling 215 acres, up to \$1,083,250 allocated to the Ocean County Natural Lands Trust);

■ **The Forest Area of Lacey and Manchester townships in Ocean County:** (one property totaling 73 acres, up to \$185,833 allocated to the Ocean County Natural Lands Trust; **Requires concurrent approval by the Pinelands Commission**).

Including the \$2,162,266 expenditure from the Pinelands Conservation Fund and the cost-share funding from local governmental and nonprofit organizations, more than \$6.6 million worth of properties will be preserved.

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Specific details regarding each property will be released upon completion of contraction negotiations.

The six properties represent the third round of funding that the Commission's Permanent Land Protection Committee has allocated for land acquisition through the Pinelands Conservation Fund (PCF). In the previous two rounds, 17 properties totaling 2,919 acres have been allocated funding from the PFC. The total fair market value of those properties is \$17.8 million. The properties are located in the Pinelands in Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Ocean counties.

The Pinelands Conservation Fund was created in 2004 as part of an agreement with the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities to permit the construction and upgrade of an electric transmission line through eastern portions of the Pinelands. Under the agreement, the special fund was established to further the Pinelands protection program and ensure a greater level of protection of the unique resources of the Pinelands Area. The utility that built the transmission lines, Atlantic City Electric (formerly Conectiv), provided \$13 million to establish the Fund.

The Fund is dedicated to three types of projects: \$6 million for permanent land protection; \$3.5 million for conservation planning and research projects; and \$3.5 million to support community planning and design initiatives. In 2006, the Commission hired a program facilitator, Conservation Resources Inc. of Chester, N.J., to assist in the land acquisition program and to identify land preservation projects.

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The photo above shows a 199-acre property in the Toms River Planning Area that the Pinelands Commission allocated funds to preserve under the third round of the funding from the Pinelands Conservation Fund.

Newspapers can obtain a high-resolution copy of this photo by contacting Paul Leakan at (609) 894-7300.