



## **New Jersey Pinelands Commission PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Pinelands Commission authorizes agreement to extend public sanitary sewer service to the Ancora Psychiatric Hospital and eliminate failing wastewater treatment plant onsite**

NEW LISBON, N.J. – The Pinelands Commission has approved an agreement that permits the extension of public sanitary sewer service to the Ancora Psychiatric Hospital in Winslow Township, Camden County, enabling the facility to decommission a failing wastewater treatment plant onsite.

The Memorandum of Agreement was authorized by the Commission on Nov. 9, and was reached between the Commission, the New Jersey Department of Human Services, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority.

“This agreement enables Ancora to decommission its aging and failing wastewater treatment plant, which, in turn, will head off a future public health problem,” said John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the Commission. “While allowing Ancora to accommodate future wastewater flows, the agreement will also permanently protect open space, decrease demand on Pinelands water supplies and remove a significant source of pollution from a Pinelands watershed.”

The New Jersey Department of Human Services (NJ DHS) operates the Ancora Psychiatric Hospital, which is located on 202 Spring Garden Road in a Pinelands-designated Rural Development Area. The facility’s wastewater treatment plant and the associated wastewater infiltration lagoons are in failure. Moreover, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has concluded that regional geologic conditions preclude the reliable recharge of treated wastewater onsite.

To remedy the situation, the NJ DHS will decommission the existing wastewater treatment facilities and convey the wastewater via a proposed sewage force main from Ancora Psychiatric Hospital to existing sewerage infrastructure in Winslow Township to the Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority (CCMUA). The wastewater generated by Ancora will be treated at the CCMUA Water Pollution Control Facility in Camden City and discharged into the Delaware River.

The Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) permits the development of new wastewater conveyance infrastructure within a Pinelands Rural Development Area or Agricultural Production Area to address an identified public health problem and designed commensurate with existing development. However, the NJ DHS has indicated that Ancora must have the flexibility

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to accommodate future wastewater flows, such as flows resulting from judicially mandated increases in patient and inmate populations. The Commission determined that the unique circumstances at Ancora – namely the fact that existing and future wastewater disposal needs from the facility cannot be met onsite – supports a deviation of the requirements of the CMP.

Under a strict application of the CMP, construction of the proposed infrastructure within the Pinelands Rural Development Area or Agricultural Production Area, designed to accommodate both existing and future wastewater flows from the parcel, would be inconsistent with Pinelands regulations. However, the Commission found that the agreement includes measures that will, at a minimum, afford an equivalent level of protection of Pinelands resources as would be provided through strict application of the land use and environmental standards contained in the CMP.

The measures include the following:

- Indirect discharges of treated wastewater from the Ancora Psychiatric Hospital facility to the Blue Anchor Brook watershed will cease, thereby removing a significant source of pollutant loading to the watershed;
- More than 50 percent of the available land on the parcel will be permanently deed restricted as open space, approximately 350 acres. Existing surface improvements such as buildings, pavement or other structures not used in the connection to the CCMUA sewer system in the designated open space area will be removed; and
- All water withdrawals at Ancora from Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer supply wells, with a limited exception to address emergency situations that endanger human life, health or safety, will cease. Decreasing the water demand on the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer is expected to enhance streamflow conditions within the Blue Anchor Brook, thereby decreasing ecological impacts.

If the future sewerage of Elmtowne or the Village of Elm becomes necessary due to public health problems, and is authorized by the Commission, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and the CCMUA, the NJDHS has agreed to consider an easement for the sewer area on the Ancora parcel. The easement would be subject to Winslow Township's payment of any reasonable user fees or other costs. It would permit Winslow to install sewage infrastructure to connect Elmtowne and/or the Village of Elm to the CCMUA's wastewater treatment plant.

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