



New Jersey Pinelands Commission **PRESS RELEASE**

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Contact: Paul Leakan

Phone: 609.894.7300

E-mail: info@njpines.state.nj.us

700-acre property in the Pinelands in Atlantic County permanently preserved with money from the Pinelands Conservation Fund

NEW LISBON, N.J. – An environmentally-sensitive, 700-acre property in the Pinelands in Hamilton Township, Atlantic County has been permanently preserved with funds administered by the New Jersey Pinelands Commission.

The Commission has transferred \$300,000 from the Pinelands Conservation Fund to Atlantic County, which is using the money toward its recent purchase of the Cologne Avenue property. The acquisition was a cooperative effort among the Commission, Atlantic County and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres Program.

The land is located less than one mile from the Hamilton Mall and the Cape Atlantic Community College, and it might have been subject to the development of 40 to 60 single-family homes. It is also located adjacent to New Jersey Natural Lands Trust's Mankiller Preserve and the Makepeace Lake Wildlife Management Area.

"This outstanding property contains an expansive block of Pinelands forest with critical habitat for rare and indigenous wildlife and a substantial amount of uplands that also made it vulnerable to development," said John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission. "This land is located next to several state-owned properties that already have been preserved, as well as a rapidly growing area. The Commission is thrilled to be in a position to help permanently preserve this property and its tremendous natural resources. By doing so, we can greatly bolster the protection of surrounding forested land and the Pinelands ecosystem as a whole."

The property is located in a Pinelands-designated Rural Development Area and contains a significant amount of uplands, as well as a stream that passes through the center of the parcel and creates critical habitat for various species of Pinelands plants and animals. The previous landowners had provided the Pinelands Commission with a conceptual development plan that shows 69 lots.

The property is home to vernal ponds (**see enclosed photos**), which are areas where water collects in the winter and spring but dry up during the summer, preventing the establishment of fish that would normally prey upon amphibians. These areas are important because they provide breeding habitat for certain rare Pinelands species such as the Pine Barrens treefrog and Eastern tiger salamander.

Thus far, the Pinelands Commission has granted \$619,333 from the Pinelands Conservation Fund toward the permanent preservation of approximately 900 acres in the Pinelands. This includes the preservation of a 70-acre parcel in Buena Vista, Atlantic County, a 20-acre property in Galloway, Atlantic County, a 63-acre property in Mullica, Atlantic County, a 10-acre property in Medford,

(MORE)

Pinelands Press Release

Page 2...

Burlington County and a 30-acre property on the border of Buena Borough, Atlantic County and Franklin Township, Gloucester County. The fair market value of these properties is \$3.3 million.

The Commission has allocated an additional \$4,829,000 from the Pinelands Conservation Fund to preserve 2,221 more acres in the Pinelands, with a fair market value of \$18,105,000.

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 help identify worthy land preservation projects.

***** ATTENTION REPORTERS/EDITORS:** High-resolution, digital photos and maps of the Cologne Avenue property are available by contacting Paul Leakan at (609) 894-7300, ext. 124.



**Above: The 700-acre property in Hamilton features vernal ponds such as the one above. Vernal ponds provide breeding habitat for rare Pinelands species such as the Pine Barrens treefrog.
Photo/Paul Leakan**

(MORE)

Pinelands Press Release

Page 3...

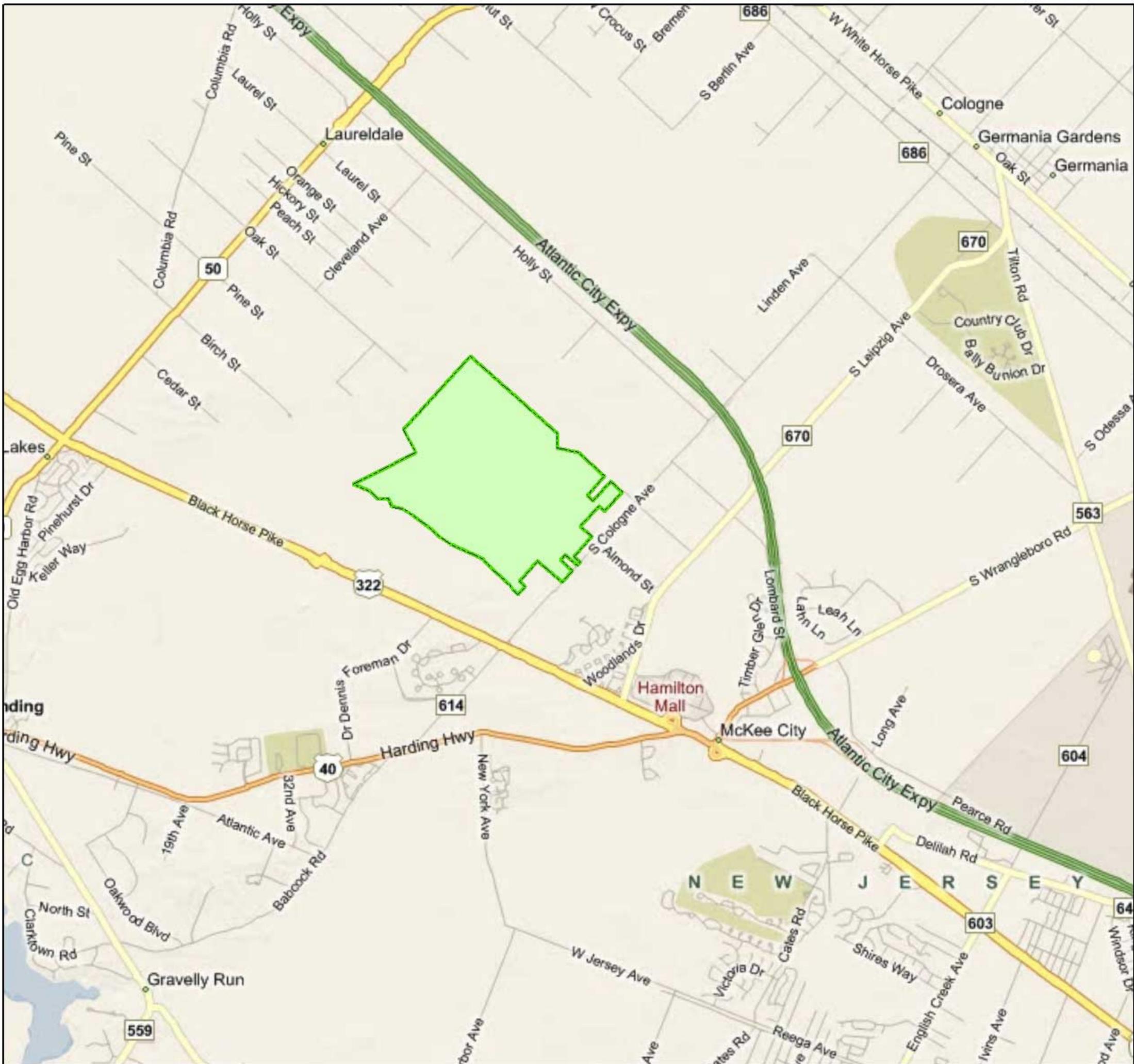


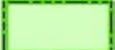
Above: Ferns line the sand road that meanders through the center of the Cologne Avenue property. Photo/Paul Leakan



Above: The Cologne Avenue property is home to vernal ponds such as the one above. Photo/Paul Leakan

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Legend
 Cologne Avenue Project

