



New Jersey Pinelands Commission PRESS RELEASE

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Pinelands Commission approves measure to require clustering of residential development in Pinelands-designated Forest and Rural Development Areas

NEW LISBON, N.J. – During its regular meeting today, the Pinelands Commission approved a measure aimed at better protecting Pinelands resources by mandating the clustering of residential development in Pinelands-designated Forest Areas and Rural Development Areas.

The Commission voted to adopt an amendment to the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP), the rules that govern land-use, development and natural resource protection in the million-acre Pinelands Area, by requiring municipalities to incorporate the clustering provisions into their zoning ordinances.

“These changes will be vital in helping to preserve and maintain the essential character of the Pinelands environment, while preventing the proliferation of homes on large lots scattered throughout the Pinelands Forest and Rural Development areas,” said John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission. “By requiring the clustering of residential development in these areas, we will permanently protect large, contiguous areas of environmentally-sensitive land that contains high water quality resources and provides important habitat for characteristic and rare Pinelands plants and animals.”

Clustering is a style of development that allows reduced minimum lot sizes in exchange for the preservation of open space or other desirable features of a property. Clustering does not necessarily change the number of homes, but the individual lot sizes are smaller than that which would occur under a conventional lot layout. Development can be directed toward appropriate locations of a property, such as areas close to roads and other infrastructure, while natural resources such as critical habitat for rare plant and animal species can be protected.

The Commission will require the clustering of residential development in the Pinelands-designated Forest Areas and Rural Development Areas on one-acre lots. The open space created as a result of clustering will be permanently protected through deed restriction. Generally, the protected land will be owned by a homeowners association, a nonprofit organization or the municipality.

The amendment also establishes bonus density provisions for clustered development in the Forest and Rural Development Areas in order to encourage the consolidation of small lots and the protection of larger areas of open space. Permitted residential densities average one unit per 28

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acres in the Forest Area and one unit per 5 acres in the Rural Development Area. The density bonuses depend on the size of the tract and the municipal zoning designation.

In those rare cases where agricultural lands exist within that portion of the property to be protected through clustering, an agricultural easement may provide for continued agricultural use and expansion of that use up to 50 percent if certain conditions are met.

The amendments are a major outgrowth of the Pinelands Commission's comprehensive, five-year review of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP). The CMP has guided land-use and development in the state-designated Pinelands Area since it took effect on January 14, 1981.

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