



New Jersey Pinelands Commission **PRESS RELEASE**

For Release: March 5, 2002

Contact: Francis Rapa

phone: 609.894.7300

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

Pinelands Panel Discussion Set for March 13 *Public Forum will focus on Permanent Land Protection*

NEW LISBON, NJ - As part of the New Jersey Pinelands Commission's review of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP), the first in a series of three public panel discussions on how to better protect the unique natural and cultural resources of the Pinelands will take place on **Wednesday, March 13**, from **1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.**, at the Pinelands Commission's Richard J. Sullivan Center in New Lisbon.

"A panel of approximately 15-20 representatives of both governmental and non-governmental organizations will focus on permanent land protection in the million-acre Pinelands, the challenges ahead, and possible strategies for meeting those challenges," explained Annette Barbaccia, Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission. "There will also be opportunities for members of the public to raise questions to the panelists."

The forum is an important part of the year-long CMP review, which began in January when Barbaccia submitted the Third Progress Report on Plan Implementation to the 15-member Pinelands Commission for review. The report examines the activities, programs and initiatives of the Pinelands Commission since the last review was completed five years ago, as well as since the Pinelands CMP was first implemented in 1980.

Permanent land protection is one of the priority issues that the Commission has identified for the CMP review. Another issue, development of Regional Growth Areas, will be the focus of a panel discussion to be scheduled for sometime in April. A third panel discussion will address other significant issues raised by interested parties.

Public input garnered from the panel discussions as well as written comments submitted to the Commission will be reviewed along with the information contained in the Progress Report to determine what issues will be addressed by the Commission through recommended CMP amendments or other actions. The final step in the CMP Review will be a report issued by the Commission's Executive Director during early 2003 that summarizes the work completed to date, sets future work schedules and provides a critique of the CMP and Plan Review process.

Permanent Land Protection Panel Discussion
Page 2

“Public Participation is key to a successful CMP review,” said Barbaccia. “The Commission understands that our stakeholders, including Pinelands residents, the environmental community, business interests and other concerned citizens, will bring diverse viewpoints to this process. The Pinelands Plan has worked incredibly well for more than two decades, and as we identify ways to fine-tune the CMP, it’s important to give the public a voice in this review.”

At present, representatives of the following organizations are scheduled to participate on the Permanent Land Protection panel:

- Pinelands Municipal Council;
- NJ Forestry Association;
- The Nature Conservancy;
- American Cranberry Growers Association;
- NJ Farm Bureau;
- NJ Builders Association;
- NJ Audubon Society;
- Association of NJ Environmental Commissions;
- Ocean County Planning Office;
- NJ DEP, Endangered & Nongame Species Program;
- NJ DEP, Division of Parks and Forestry;
- NJ DEP Green Acres Program;
- Banisch Associates (professional planners);
- NJ State Agriculture Development Committee; and
- Pinelands Development Credit Bank.

The Richard J. Sullivan Center is located at 15 Springfield Road, New Lisbon, NJ.

###