



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

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### *Pinelands Commission signs off on an ordinance expanding wildlife buffers in the Toms River corridor in Jackson Township*

SOUTHAMPTON – The Pinelands Commission today certified a Jackson Township ordinance aimed at protecting upland habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife by establishing special buffer requirements in the township’s ecologically-sensitive Toms River corridor.

Adopted by the Jackson Township Committee on July 11, the measure sets forth new requirements prohibiting certain development activities within a 600-foot buffer from wetlands along the main stem of the Toms River and the Ridgeway Branch within the Pinelands National Reserve area of the township.

“Jackson Township officials should be commended for adopting a measure that is protective of important wildlife habitat and the rights of property owners,” Pinelands Commission Chairperson Betty Wilson said.

Permitted uses within the buffer overlay are restricted to low-intensity recreational uses, forestry, fish and wildlife management, berry agriculture, horticulture of native Pinelands species, beekeeping, bridges, roads, trails, and utility transmission and distribution facilities. Additionally, a number of existing uses such as existing resource extraction activities, active agriculture, existing dwellings and existing commercial structures are allowed in the overlay. However, the development of new buildings, structures, impervious surface and new resource extraction activities are prohibited within the buffer.

The buffer requirements will create an approximately 2,000-foot-wide corridor that connects major nodes of known habitat for threatened Northern pine snakes and protects critical habitat for endangered timber rattlesnakes and other wetlands-oriented wildlife species.

The buffer provisions were among the core recommendations contained in the Regional Natural Resource Protection Plan for the Toms River Corridor. The plan was developed in 2004 as part of

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a two-year, sub-regional conservation planning project undertaken by Jackson and Manchester township officials, Pinelands Commission staff and a team of representatives from non-profit, county, state and federal agencies.

Also as a result of the sub-regional conservation planning project, the Pinelands Commission in April 2005 approved a series of sweeping amendments to Jackson Township's land use and development ordinance. The amendments require clustering of residential development in a number of zoning districts so that development is directed to the most appropriate locations of a property while important natural resources are protected onsite.

The ordinance amendments approved by the Commission in April also incorporate a reduction of the Township's three Pinelands Villages – Cassville, Legler, and Vanhiseville – by some 1,100 acres to make them more proportionate to their existing size and character. The re-zoned areas have been re-designated as lower-density Pinelands Forest Area and Rural Development Area.

In addition to the Villages, approximately 760 acres of land was re-zoned from Rural Development to Forest Area and about 350 acres along the Toms River was re-zoned from Regional Growth to Rural Development.

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