



## New Jersey Pinelands Commission NEWS RELEASE

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### **Commission Moves to Strengthen Protection of Rare Plants** *Proposal will expand number of Pinelands-protected plants*

SOUTHAMPTON, NJ - The Pinelands Commission today voted to propose an amendment to the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) that will bolster protections afforded to threatened and endangered plant species. The change will incorporate, into the CMP, the official State-promulgated list of endangered plants, expanding the number of protected native Pinelands plants from 54 to approximately 92. The State list is maintained by the NJDEP Division of Parks and Forestry.

The State list, which now stands at 339 plants, was adopted pursuant to legislation passed in 1989. This was nine years after adoption of the Pinelands CMP, which since 1980, has included its own list of 54 protected plants. The State list includes only the most vulnerable plants - globally rare plants and species with five or fewer occurrences statewide. Of the 339 State-listed plants, about 38 occur in the Pinelands Areas but are not currently on the CMP list. Another 20 are common to both lists.

“Over the past 24 years, we’ve gained a great deal of knowledge about the rare botanical resources of the Pinelands,” said Pinelands Commission Executive Director John C. Stokes. “Despite the success of the Pinelands Plan, threats to these unique resources still exist today. The addition of these extremely rare plants to the Pinelands protection program will better coordinate State and Pinelands programs to ensure their continued protection.”

Among the Pinelands plant species that will gain CMP protection through this measure are the:

- Barton’s St. John’s-wort (*Hypericum adpressum*), a globally rare plant that typically occurs in vernal ponds. A significant portion of its small remaining worldwide population is in New Jersey;
- Sessile-leaf tick-trefoil (*Desmodium sessilifolium*), a Midwestern species with only one known remaining population in New Jersey, which is in the Pinelands;
- Pine Barrens bellwort (*Uvularia puberula*), another globally rare species. The only New Jersey populations are in Pine Barrens habitat; and
- Lace-lip ladies’-tresses (*Spiranthes laciniata*) a southern orchid species that reaches its northern limit in the Pinelands.

Today’s vote authorizes the Pinelands Commission staff to begin the rule amendment process. A rule proposal is expected to be published in the October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004 edition of the New Jersey Register, which will be followed by a public comment period, including a public hearing. The amendment would likely be adopted in early 2005.

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