



New Jersey Pinelands Commission **PRESS RELEASE**

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Pinelands Commission receives federal grant to study pond ecology

Research to assess land-use impacts, prioritize ponds for increased protection

NEW LISBON, N.J. – During its meeting today, the New Jersey Pinelands Commission accepted a federal grant that will help fund a study of Pinelands ponds and provide information needed to better protect them from land-use impacts.

Commission scientists will use the \$350,524 grant, awarded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to assess the ecological integrity of "intermittent" ponds throughout the Pinelands. These ponds are called "intermittent" because they are not connected to streams and occasionally dry out, creating fishless environments that serve as important breeding grounds for frogs and toads such as the rare Pine Barrens treefrog. Intermittent ponds also provide habitat for many rare plants.

"We are thrilled to receive federal funding for a study that will increase our understanding of Pinelands ponds and their vulnerability to land-use impacts," said Nancy Wittenberg, the Commission's Executive Director. "This information will be used to enhance the protection of these ponds and the important habitats they provide for rare species."

During the course of the 4 1/2 year research project, Commission scientists will map the location of ponds, document off-road vehicle activity, monitor water quality and hydrology, survey plant and animal assemblages and quantify the impact of land use on these ponds.

The Commission will identify and prioritize ponds that need enhanced protection. This includes ponds that have been damaged by the illegal use of off-road vehicles, which may be addressed through increased enforcement. Additionally, the Commission may evaluate potential planning and regulatory measures to better protect these ponds.

The Commission will supplement the EPA grant funding by contributing \$116,841 from its Pinelands Conservation Fund. The 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 fund was established to further the Pinelands protection program and ensure a greater level of protection of the unique resources of the Pinelands Area.

Today's action by the Pinelands Commission does not take effect until 10 days after a copy of the meeting minutes have been delivered to the Governor to allow time for his review and consideration.

(MORE)

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***** ATTENTION REPORTERS/EDITORS:** A high-resolution jpeg photograph of the intermittent pond below can be obtained by contacting Paul Leakan at (609) 894-7300, ext. 124 or info@njpines.state.nj.us.

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The Pinelands Commission will study the ecology of intermittent ponds such as this one in Burlington County. Photo/Kim Laidig.