



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

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### **Pinelands Commission Authorizes Agreement for Atlantic City Airport**

NEW LISBON, NJ - At its monthly meeting today, the Pinelands Commission authorized the signing of an agreement with the South Jersey Transportation Authority (SJTA) to facilitate six short-term development projects at the Atlantic City International Airport. The projects, part of a broader management plan for the airport, include new and expanded terminal area facilities, runway upgrades, development of new holding aprons and construction of a hotel and conference center.

The agreement sets forth 30 environmental commitments on the part of the SJTA to safeguard natural resources at the airport and provide enhancements to wildlife habitat. Measures include the creation of 290-acre grassland conservation area and management plan to provide habitat for neo-tropical grassland bird species. In addition, the SJTA will designate over 400 acres of forest preservation area for long-term protection of a forested wetlands ecosystem along the North Branch of Absecon Creek.

Other commitments include various management practices, activities and restrictions aimed at maintaining quality habitat and minimizing disturbance of key plant and animal species. The SJTA will also perform surveys to monitor the success of the measures and ensure the proper balances are maintained.

“The Commission is pleased that the Authority has agreed to significant commitments for the protection of wildlife and other natural resources,” said Pinelands Commission Executive Director John Stokes. “The Pinelands Commission views these measures as an overall advancement of natural resource protection on the airport property. At the same time, both agencies are promoting environmentally sound economic development.”

The Atlantic City International Airport covers approximately 2,100 acres in Egg Harbor, Galloway and Hamilton Townships in Atlantic County. The property is home to a number of threatened and endangered animal species, including the grasshopper sparrow, upland sandpiper, barred owl, Coopers hawk and Pine Barrens treefrog. Some of the species are attracted to the property by man-made grassland habitat which surrounds the airport runways, approaches, and taxiways.

“The Pinelands Commission commends the South Jersey Transportation Authority for going beyond what was required to make this plan work for the environment,” Stokes added. “Absent this agreement, the Authority’s development options would have been limited, but the long-term protection of 700 acres of important natural resource lands would not have been ensured. This is how smart growth should work.”

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