

The

PINELANDER

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW JERSEY PINELANDS COMMISSION/ SUMMER 2005

A Succession of Pinelands Protectors

James Florio ends accomplished term as Pinelands Chairman, Betty Wilson selected to lead as Chairperson

Former Gov. James J. Florio can look back on the past three years as Chairman of the Pinelands Commission with a strong sense of pride and accomplishment.

Florio, who stepped down at the end of his term, can also look ahead with confidence in the future of the Commission and its new leader.

On June 9, Acting Gov. Richard J. Codey appointed Betty Wilson as the new chairperson of the 15-member Pinelands Commission and nominated her for a second term on the Commission.

"The Pinelands Commission is in excellent hands," said Florio, who has known Betty Wilson for many years from their time in the New Jersey Legislature and on the Pinelands Commission.

Wilson, a Burlington County resident who was appointed to the Commission in 2002, brings a wealth of experience to the position.

A summa cum laude graduate of Jersey City State College (now Jersey City University), Wilson served in the New Jersey General Assembly from 1974-1975. She also served as the Assistant Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in 1976-1977 before becoming the DEP's Deputy Commissioner. During that time, she oversaw the agency's natural resource management, Pinelands policy and review process, among other things.

Wilson also was the Associate Director of Recreation Programs for the U.S. Department of Interior in 1980, the Deputy Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Industry in 1981 and Assistant Commissioner for Public



James J. Florio



Betty Wilson

Affairs for the New Jersey Department of Human Services from 1990-1993.

Wilson, a founding member of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance, said she is honored to have the opportunity to continue Florio's work and strong leadership.

Florio, who was appointed as chairman by then-Gov. James E. McGreevey in 2002, leaves behind a strong legacy as a pioneer and proponent of Pinelands protection.

As a U.S. Congressman, Florio sponsored legislation in 1977 that established the Pinelands National Reserve.

During his term as the Commission's Chairman, Florio led the development of a five-year strategic plan to advance permanent land protection and community development in the Pinelands. Five strategies and eight initiatives were set forth for land protection, and seven strategies and 11 initiatives were devised for community development.

Also during his term, one of the most comprehensive water resource projects in New Jersey's history was launched to determine how Southern New Jersey's water supply needs can be met without impacting the Pinelands. The 6-year, \$5.5 million

project is being led by the Pinelands Commission, in partnership with Rutgers University, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

Under Florio's leadership, the \$13 million Pinelands Conservation Fund was established. The fund provides money that will be used to protect important natural, cultural, historic and agricultural resources through the purchase of land and conservation easements. The fund also will sustain critical research and community planning efforts for years to come.

Also during Florio's tenure, a task force consisting of non-governmental organizations as well as state, county and municipal officials began evaluating growth projections in Southern New Jersey for the first time in 25 years in an effort to determine how to plan for future development in the Pinelands.

Florio's term also was marked by groundbreaking, sub-regional conservation efforts devised to take a closer look at critical areas of the Pinelands.

The Pinelands Commission completed two community planning projects for growth areas in Hamilton and Winslow townships during Florio's term. A third project, this time in Egg Harbor Township, has begun.

Also under Florio's leadership, the Commission instituted a project aimed at developing a systematic way for government to ensure that septic systems are properly maintained and managed over the long term.





Commission Approves Plan for \$13 Million Conservation Fund

The New Jersey Pinelands Commission has approved a plan to direct the use and management of the new Pinelands Conservation Fund.

The Fund was recently created as part of an agreement with the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU) to permit the construction and upgrade of an electric transmission line through eastern portions of the Pinelands.

Under the agreement, the special fund was set up to "further the Pinelands protection program and ensure a greater level of protection of the unique resources of the Pinelands Area."

The utility constructing the transmission lines, Atlantic City Electric (formerly Conectiv), is providing \$13 million to establish the fund.

The Pinelands Commission approved the plan during its April meeting.

The plan dedicates the funding to three types of projects: \$6 million dollars will be allocated for permanent land protection, \$3.5 million will go toward conservation planning and research projects and \$3.5 million will support community planning and design initiatives.

The Pinelands Conservation Fund was developed with extensive public input,

according to John C. Stokes, the Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission.

"We invited public input on the proposal and held a public forum in January," Stokes said. "As a result, the Commission received recommendations from 18 public and non-profit organizations."

The objectives of the permanent land protection component will be to protect important natural, cultural, historic and agricultural resources through the purchase of land and conservation easements.

Funding will be appropriated for the acquisition of lands that are recommended as part of regional or sub-regional plans adopted by the Commission or through other acquisition recommendations approved by the Commission. Priority will be given to projects that supplement Pinelands Conservation Fund proceeds with other state, federal, local or private funding.

Funds disbursed under the conservation planning and research component must also directly benefit the conservation of Pinelands resources, including the funding of sub-regional conservation planning projects and applied scientific research projects. This portion of the fund will support the ecologically based electric trans-

mission right-of-way maintenance plan project, also set forth in the BPU agreement. This project is developing a management approach to maintain early successional habitats along electric rights-of-way within the Pinelands while maintaining transmission safety and reliability.

The third component of the plan will support ongoing community planning and design efforts in Pinelands municipalities. This will build upon the work of the Dodge Foundation-supported Pinelands Excellence Program, which develops community action plans to create livable and sustainable communities.

The Pinelands Conservation Fund plan also sets forth policies for the investment, management and administration of Fund monies. To date, the Commission has received \$9.75 million. The remaining \$3.25 million is scheduled to be received on or before March 13, 2006.



A copy of the Pinelands Conservation Fund policy is available on the Pinelands Commission website at: www.nj.gov/pinelands/infor/news/cons_fund.pdf

Commission Provides Guidance to School Districts

The Pinelands Commission and New Jersey Department of Education have sent a list of regulatory guidelines to every school district in the Pinelands in an effort to help school officials properly and more efficiently plan school construction projects.

The Commission recently mailed the guidelines to all 48 school districts located within the Pinelands Area, which covers portions of seven counties in Southern New Jersey.

The guidelines were prepared in conjunction with the New Jersey Department of Education. They describe how school districts can plan and design their school facility projects in a manner that avoids conflicts with the relevant zoning and environmental policies of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan, the rules that govern development and land use in the Pinelands.

"These guidelines will provide school districts with important suggestions that they

can use early in their planning process, which should help them avoid potential land-use or regulatory conflicts and result in Pinelands-consistent projects that are finished in a more orderly and efficient manner," said John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission.

The guidelines include details on the process for gaining the necessary approvals for expansion or construction at existing school facilities as well as the siting and construction of new school facilities in the Pinelands. The location of educational facilities in the Pinelands is governed by the land use policies of the Comprehensive Management Plan. The policies are implemented through municipal zoning ordinances that have been approved by the Pinelands Commission.

The guidelines, for example, recommend that school districts contact the Pinelands Commission's Land Use Office early in their planning process and request assistance in identifying one or more Pinelands-

consistent sites on which to build a new school facility. By identifying sites that are likely to meet Pinelands land use and development requirements, school districts can avoid sites that are likely to raise major land use or regulatory hurdles that significantly delay or hinder the process for siting a school facility.

In addition, the guidelines make note of requirements regarding public sanitary sewer systems, wetlands buffers and stormwater management in the Pinelands, as well as the special protection afforded to rare plants and animals. The Pinelands is home to 44 threatened or endangered species of animals and approximately 90 threatened or endangered species of plants. In cases where a proposed site has suitable habitat for one or more rare plants or animals, a field survey may be required to determine whether a particular project may impact the critical habitat onsite.





Governor nominates candidates for re-appointment to the Pinelands Commission

In addition to nominating Betty Wilson, Acting New Jersey Gov. Richard J. Codey has nominated Candace McKee Ashmun, Rev. Dr. Guy Campbell Jr., Stephen V. Lee III and Edward Lloyd for reappointment to the Pinelands Commission.

Codey formally submitted the nominations to the New Jersey Senate in June. The nominations are subject to the review and consent of the Senate.

The Pinelands Commission is comprised of 15 members. Seven of the members are appointed by the governor, while one is appointed by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. In addition, each of the seven counties in the Pinelands appoints one member.

Members of the Commission serve staggered, three-year terms and are not paid for their service.

Although the terms of the five nominees have previously expired, all have agreed to continue to serve on the Commission in a hold-over capacity.

Candace McKee Ashmun, who lives in Somerset County, has served on the Pinelands Commission since its creation in 1979. Ashmun has also served on the State Planning Commission and as Executive Director and three-term President of the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions. Ashmun is a trustee of the Coalition for Affordable Housing and the

Environment and Vice President of the Board of the Fund for New Jersey. At the local level, she has served on the Bedminster Board of Education, Board of Adjustment and Environmental Commission, and served as Vice Chair of the Far Hills Planning Board.

Rev. Dr. Guy Campbell Jr., who lives in Burlington County, has served on the Pinelands Commission since 2002. He has served as pastor of Evergreen Baptist Church in Palmyra since 1969, during which time the church membership has grown from 60 people to more than 400 families. He serves as the Fourth Vice-President of the National Baptist Convention and is a member of the Convention's Foreign Mission Board. Dr. Campbell serves as moderator of the Bethany Baptist Association of Southern New Jersey and is past President of the Baptist Ministers Conference of Philadelphia and Vicinity as well as the Baptist Pastors' Conference of Burlington County and Vicinity.

Stephen V. Lee III, who also lives in Burlington County, was first appointed to the Pinelands Commission in 1982. A partner in Lee Brothers, Inc., an 1,800-acre cranberry and blueberry farm in the heart of the Pinelands, Lee also serves on the Board of Directors of Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc. Lee served for 16 years

on the Board of Trustees of Burlington County College, including seven years as Chair. He served as Chairman of the Burlington County Planning Board, as a member of the County Farmland Preservation Committee, and on the Pinelands Environmental Council, an agency that preceded the Pinelands Commission.

Edward Lloyd, who lives in Essex County, was appointed to the Pinelands Commission in 2002. Lloyd is a Clinical Professor of Environmental Law at Columbia Law School. He previously served for 15 years as Director of the Rutgers University Environmental Law Clinic. Lloyd is also General Counsel and past Executive Director of the New Jersey Public Interest Research Group. He has served on the New Jersey Supreme Court Committee on Environmental Litigation, and has testified before Congressional and legislative committees on issues including energy conservation, solar power, clean water standards and regulations, freedom of information, water supply planning and conservation, and solid waste.

Gov. Codey's nomination of the four Commission members comes on the heels of his recent appointment of Betty Wilson to serve as chairperson of the Pinelands Commission and her nomination for reappointment to a second term.



Conservation project in Southern Evesham and Medford progressing

Work continues on an innovative natural resource planning project that the Pinelands Commission launched last year in Southern Evesham and Medford townships in Burlington County.

The southern portions of the two townships include large areas designated under the Pinelands protection program for modest amounts of residential development. However, data compiled in recent years has shown that the area has a high concentration of rare plants and animals.

The Pinelands Commission received a \$73,000 grant from the William Penn Foundation in 2004 to fund efforts to develop a detailed conservation plan for the 22-square-mile area.

Thus far, the Commission has organized

a Steering Committee comprised of officials from Medford and Evesham as well as a representative from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the Pinelands Commission.

The Steering Committee appointed an 18-person Project Advisory Committee and a 17-person Technical Support Group to help guide the Steering Committee's decisions. The Steering Committee also contracted a project facilitator, who, working with Pinelands Commission staff, has helped guide the project planning process. Since the Steering Committee's first meeting in August 2004, the three project committees have been meeting regularly.

A natural resource inventory of the project area was completed in December 2004.

Since then, the project committees have been discussing a series of regulatory and non-regulatory preservation strategies designed to respond to the specific characteristics of the project area. Strategies include a series of zoning changes that are intended to adjust the land use patterns in Medford and Evesham and create the opportunity for enhanced resource preservation. Non-regulatory strategies generally fall into three major categories: land acquisition, inventory needs and land stewardship.

The Final Plan for the project area will be presented to property owners and other interested parties during a public meeting tentatively scheduled for October.





Challenges, Opportunities Lie Ahead in the Pinelands

By James J. Florio

The more things change, the more they stay the same.

In 1973, when I was a young New Jersey assemblyman, the nation experienced an energy crisis caused by an Arab oil embargo. A frantic public sought “energy independence” by authorizing oil drilling off our coastlines. Any oil found would be transported via pipeline to our refineries on the Delaware River. A route for those lines would be through the Pinelands.

I went off to Congress in 1974, and congressional action to stop oil drilling off New Jersey was taken. The potential threat to the Pinelands stuck with me, however, and prompted my authorship of the federal Pinelands legislation, which President Jimmy Carter signed into law.

Sometimes, looking back at “what might have been” can be cause for regret. But that’s certainly not the case with New Jersey’s best-kept, million-acre secret: the Pinelands.

If those of us who were concerned about preserving this magnificent expanse – and the drinking water supply that lies beneath it – had not acted 25 years ago, it’s not hard to imagine what the area would look like today. It’s not hard to imagine because it would have looked like so much of New Jersey that has not been protected. The economic boom of the 1980s and 1990s would surely have resulted in unsustainable development and depleted water supplies.

What might have seemed at the time to offer short-term rewards would surely have led to long-term degradation. The Pinelands would have lost its character and viability – and New Jersey would have been a poorer place for it. (And that’s what would likely have happened in the Highlands if the preservation process had not recently been set in motion there). But the legislative measures taken a quarter-century ago are not the sole reason the Pinelands have escaped sprawl and overdevelopment.

It has taken the constant vigilance of dedicated staff and members of the Pinelands Commission, working hand in hand with

local residents and officials, to make the federal legislation and the state’s Pinelands Protection Act a living document.

For me, as sponsor of the federal legislation that set Pinelands preservation in motion and as chairman of the Pinelands Commission, now finishing my three-year term, this is a perfect time to reflect on what has happened.

Development in the Pinelands has taken place where it should – and hasn’t where it shouldn’t. The fragile ecosystems crucial to supporting diverse aquatic, plant and animal communities have remained intact.

The challenge is to keep it that way. That’s why the Pinelands Commission is leading a team of state, federal and university scientists in a study of the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer that supplies water to South Jersey. The aim of this unparalleled research project is to help policy-makers determine how much water can be taken from the aquifer without harming the Pinelands environment and coastal estuaries; a wrong guess would have profound environmental and economic consequences.

Another key element is the \$13 million Pinelands Conservation Fund established to sustain important initiatives for years to come. This fund will provide much-needed support for land-acquisition, applied research and sound community planning.

Sub-regional conservation efforts, undertaken with the support and assistance of municipal governments in Jackson, Manchester and Barnegat townships, have better protected thousands of acres in the Toms River basin and Ocean Acres area. In Burlington County, with help from a

William Penn Foundation grant, we also are partnering with Medford and Evesham townships to help protect a 14,000-acre area adjoining one of the Pinelands’ crown jewels: Wharton State Forest.

Support from the Geraldine R. Dodge

Foundation has allowed the Pinelands Commission to hire nationally acclaimed planning and transportation consultants to help Hamilton Township in Atlantic County and Winslow Township in Camden County prepare “smart growth” community development plans.

Meanwhile, a task force of public and private partners is nearing completion of a project that will be indispensable as the commission determines how best to adjust zoning in the Pinelands.

These are but a few of the coordinated, collaborative steps being taken to protect the Pinelands for future generations. No shortage of challenges lies ahead. To meet them, the stewards of the Pinelands will have to keep alive the lessons of the past 25

years. That means being forward-looking and open to new ideas for furthering the goals of the Pinelands Protection Act – particularly those that help to better protect water resources, properly manage forests and maintain strong, economically sustainable communities.

I’m confident that the Pinelands Commission will remain dedicated and vigilant in its efforts to protect this very special part of New Jersey.

“Development in the Pinelands has taken place where it should -- and hasn’t where it shouldn’t. The fragile ecosystems crucial to supporting diverse aquatic, plant and animal communities have remained intact. The challenge is to keep it that way.”

James J. Florio served as New Jersey’s governor from 1990 to 1994 and recently completed a three-year term as Chairman of the Pinelands Commission.





16th Annual Pinelands Short Course Continued a Successful Pinelands Tradition

Approximately 375 Pinelands enthusiasts, 19 very knowledgeable presenters, Pinelands Commission staff, Burlington County College staff, and volunteers came together March 4 to make the 16th annual Pinelands Short Course a great success.

The Pinelands Commission continued its partnership with Burlington County College to hold the event at the college's Pemberton Township campus for the second straight year.

A longtime participant who has attended all 16 years of the course told event

organizers that he believes this year's program was one of the best ever.

Many attendees noted that they enjoy traveling through the Pinelands on their way to and from the event.

Once more, the college's location provides many opportunities for field trips to local Pinelands destinations, giving participants a chance to experience them first-hand.

The course featured 10 new programs, a total that seemed to spur renewed interest in the Short Course from many past participants.

Among other things, the new programs included discussions and presentations on timber rattlesnakes, the Revolutionary War history in the Pinelands and traditional uses of native Pinelands plants.

Also, for the first time the course featured a performance by the Sugar Sand Ramblers, who performed traditional Pinelands music.

A good sign for the future of the event is that many of the attendees participated in the course for first time.

In their evaluations of the course, many people said they enjoyed the program and was sure it would not be their last.

People are drawn to the Pinelands, or Pine Barrens, for many reasons.

Some find a sense of wilderness or wild in the region, while others are intrigued by the unique flora, fauna, habitats and ecology.

The folklore, legends and mysteries of the Pinelands are a calling for others. After all, when you're in the area, there is always a chance to meet the Jersey Devil.

The 16th annual Pinelands Short Course continued its long tradition of providing the public with an opportunity to increase their

knowledge, understanding, and experiences of the Pinelands. As in the past, the participants profited from interacting and learning from many of the leading experts, professionals, and educators in the field of Pinelands topics.

The main goal of the Pinelands Short Course has always been to educate people about the importance of the unique natural, historic and cultural resources of the Pinelands, while raising awareness and appreciation of the region.

The Short Course also promotes the ongoing efforts of the Pinelands Commission, which is charged with preserving, protecting, and enhancing the natural and cultural resources of Pinelands.



Maris Gabliks, chief fire warden of the New Jersey Forest Fire Service, discusses the fire-prone ecosystem of the Pinelands during the well-attended Pinelands Short Course.

Mark your Calendar and Save this Date:

March 4, 2006

17th Annual

Pinelands Short Course at Burlington County College



Hundreds of Pinelands enthusiasts increased their knowledge of and appreciation for the Pinelands during the event held at Burlington County College's Pemberton Township campus.



Zoning Changes in Jackson's Toms River Basin Approved

The Pinelands Commission has approved sweeping amendments to Jackson Township's land use and development ordinance, seeking to better protect the township's natural resources.

The changes, which include re-zoning ecologically-important land, are the result of a special sub-regional conservation planning project coordinated by the Commission.

The amendments are the culmination of two years of cooperative work by Jackson Township officials, Commission staff and a team of representatives from non-profit, county, state and federal agencies.

The success of the Toms River Task Force, established by the Commission in April 2003, has set a high standard for future sub-regional conservation planning efforts designed to address areas where potential conflicts exist between Pinelands development and resource-protection standards.

The changes approved by the Commission implement some of the key recommendations of the February 2004 Regional Natural Resources Protection Plan for the Toms River Corridor. Among them is 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 will be re-designated as lower-density Pinelands Forest Area and Rural Development Area.

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

The zoning changes not only reflect existing land uses, but also the presence of wetlands systems and other environmental conditions.

The Pinelands Commission identified the Toms River Corridor as a priority because of potential threats to high-quality ecosystems and the habitat for rare plants and animals.

The zoning in place will better protect these important resources and provide increased predictability for landowners.

Overall, the amended ordinance will result in a net increase of 1,450 acres in the Pinelands Forest Management Area, a net decrease of 350 acres in the Regional Growth Area and a net decrease of 1,100 acres in the Pinelands Village areas. Viewed together, the zoning changes authorized today could result in a reduction of as many as 1,500 future housing units in the impacted districts.

Another significant change is the implementation of the Task Force's recommen-

dation to require mandatory clustering of residential development in a number of zoning districts. Development will be directed to the most appropriate locations on a property so that important environmental attributes on a site are protected. Undeveloped portions of sites will be permanently protected through conservation easements.

Clustering is an important component of this conservation plan. It promotes the creation of greenways and wildlife corridors, maximizes contiguity of protected lands, protects habitat for rare and endangered species, provides development opportunities in the appropriate locations and minimizes fragmentation of the natural landscape.

Jackson Township officials are to be commended for stepping up to the plate and making these vital improvements to their local zoning. Bold changes that protect the environment are never easy decisions to make and require significant, detailed analysis, deliberation and consensus-building.

The outcome here will be more sustainable natural resources and a more livable community.



A typical Pinelands meadow near the area known as the former village of "Friendship" located in Wharton State Forest. Photo by Joel Mott



Pinelands Commission launches redesigned Web site

In cooperation with the New Jersey Office of Information Technology, the Pinelands Commission has redesigned and enhanced its Web site.

The main goal of this joint project was to upgrade the Commission's Web site to meet the Internet standards, technology, and branding of the State of New Jersey. In addition to those enhancements, the Web site has been designed with the user in mind, providing easy navigation and an abundance of information in a user-friendly manner.

The redesigned Web site offers a myriad of new features such as detailed fact sheets discussing a variety of Pinelands topics and the new on-line information center, which includes numerous reports, studies, newsletters, status reports, and other valuable sources of information.

The Web site is indexed into nine topical sections, including:

Home Page: This page is an instant gateway to a variety of key information such as how to contact the Commission, employment opportunities at the Commission, news and announcements, a calendar of events and site map of the entire Web site. Also included are links to the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, where Pinelands license plates can be purchased, as well as access to Open Public Records Act (OPRA) information and request forms and the Pinelands Municipal Council home page. The navigation index for the entire site is located on the left-hand side of the page.

Pinelands National Reserve: This section provides information about the make up of the reserve, discussing topics such as size, history, people, economy, plants, wildlife, and climate of the area. Included in this section is a summary of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP).

About the Commission: In this section, you can find information specifically about the Commission as well as Commission-sponsored events and meetings.

Municipal Council: Composed of 53 Pinelands Area mayors or their designees, the Pinelands Municipal Council works closely with the Pinelands Commission. The Commission sponsors a Web site to help the Council post announcements and meeting dates.



Land Use and Planning: This section guides you to information about how the goals of the Pinelands Protection Program and the CMP are achieved through the Office of Land Use and Technology. Include here are CMP Amendments, the nine Pinelands Management Areas, Land Capability Map, Local Conformance, GIS information, and Special Projects. The Pinelands Commission is continually engaged in various special projects. This section will connect you to information about the special projects and provide details on opportunities for public participation in these projects.

Application Services: This section provides a brief introduction into the process of filing an application with the Pinelands Commission. This section will guide you through the decision making process and help you decide whether or not you need to apply to the Commission and what fees would or would not apply to you. Application forms can be downloaded from the site and printed out for use.

Research and Science: The Commission is engaged in a host of research projects to

bolster understanding of the unique and complex resources of the Pinelands. This section provides insight into the research conducted and data collected by the Commission and its Science Office.

Information Center: This on-line resource is designed to provide visitors with access to a wealth of information about the Pinelands and the endeavors of the Pinelands Commission, including news releases, fact sheets, annual reports, newsletters, brochures, maps, studies, technical guides, the Pinelands Speakers Directory, the Commission's on-line Curriculum Guides and more than 50 links to other Pinelands-related Web sites.

Pinelands Pastimes: This fun-filled section provides information for all ages about Pinelands events, and opportunities to enjoy the many treasures of the Pinelands. Included are helpful tips such as the Pinelands Guide to Recreational Opportunities, Historic Sites, Nature Centers, and Field Trips in the New Jersey Pinelands and "Take Ten," a listing of five hiking and biking trails through the Pinelands.





Pinelands Excellence Program Update

In January 2005, the Pinelands Commission received a second grant from Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation to continue the Pinelands Excellence Program. This program is aimed at building on the initial experience with Hamilton and Winslow township's Livable Community Action Plans. With assistance from nationally renowned planning and community design consultants, the Pinelands Commission hopes Egg Harbor Township will refine, expand and apply a range of community design tools. The selected planning firm will work with the Township to develop and detail high-priority strategies that may include linked open space plan implementation, commercial and residential design standards and architectural guidelines, as well as identifying appropriate sites for community facilities.

Once the community design strategies

are developed, the consultant and Pinelands Commission staff will work with Egg Harbor Township to identify, formulate and "fit" the strategies to meet the particular needs of the community.

In order to ensure community "ownership," the strategy identification and development process must be driven by elected officials and residents of the participating municipality.

Regardless of the tools the Township seeks to implement, it is essential that the municipality be a full partner throughout all the phases of this project. It will be the consultant's responsibility to outline an effective process to accomplish this objective. To ensure broad community support, the planning process will provide frequent opportunity for community input as the plan evolves. Following the identification of specific community design and develop-

ment strategies, the consultant will assist the Township to take those actions deemed necessary for implementation.

The issues to be addressed through the Egg Harbor Township community planning process and the strategies employed in Hamilton and Winslow Townships will be instructive to growing communities throughout the Pinelands. Consequently, at the conclusion of the project, the consultant will assist the Commission to conduct two seminars to help educate officials and community leaders throughout New Jersey about practical and specific solutions to their growth management issues and the public process that can be used to help identify and plan for them.



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