



New Jersey Pinelands Commission

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release:

New Jersey Pinelands Commission mourning the passing of Executive Director Nancy Wittenberg

NEW LISBON, N.J. – The New Jersey Pinelands Commission is mourning the passing of Executive Director Nancy Wittenberg, who died on Thursday, June 24th.

“Nancy will be missed by everyone she worked with at the Commission,” Commission Chairman Rick Prickett said. “Nancy was a tenacious professional who was very much a presence at public meetings. She thoroughly addressed the concerns of the public and Commissioners on matters before them. Nancy was a big supporter of the Pinelands Municipal Council and would drive many miles through the Pines to attend meetings, usually at night. Nancy was always very supportive of her staff, who she clearly cared about. We will miss Nancy’s dedication in assuring the Commission worked effectively to serve the residents of the Pinelands.”

“She had a long and accomplished career in public service,” said Commission Vice Chairman Alan W. Avery, Jr. “Her leadership and personal commitment as Executive Director have left the Commission and its staff in a strong position to continue the Commission’s mission to protect and manage the Pinelands.”



Nancy Wittenberg

“Nancy’s leadership, knowledge and fearless commitment to the Pinelands will be sadly missed,” said former Commissioner Sean W. Earlen, who served as the Commission’s Chairman from January 29, 2016 to May 14, 2019. “Her resilient drive and dedication as Executive Director were evident to all those who worked alongside her. The Pinelands Community, along with all of us who Nancy touched, are truly mourning the loss of a very special friend.”

Ms. Wittenberg had served as the Commission’s Executive Director since January 3, 2011. During her tenure, the Commission:

- Completed an in-depth review of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP),

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which contains the rules that govern land-use, development and the protection of resources in the Pinelands. This included the formation of a Plan Review Committee that gathered comments from the public and provided a forum for discussing measures aimed at strengthening the CMP. It also included the issuance of a 183-page report that includes recommendations for future changes to the Plan;

- Adopted five sets of amendments to the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan. Additional amendments pertaining to stormwater management have been proposed, and more in the works;

- Permanently preserved approximately 8,300 acres of land in the Pinelands by providing grants through the Commission's Pinelands Conservation Fund;

- Formed several Committees to address important topics, such as climate change, agriculture and the agency's process to consider Memorandums of Agreement. This also included the formation of several internal working groups that identified and enacted changes that have improved the agency's processes, communication, public reports, letters and other documents;

- Undertook several initiatives aimed at curbing the damages wrought by illegal, off-road vehicle use, including the adoption of a resolution pertaining to roads for motor vehicle use in Wharton State Forest and helping to identify ponds that are vulnerable to damages and have been protected through the installation of wooden barriers;

- Successfully completed a highly complex, 128-page report that enabled the Pinelands National Reserve to maintain its status as an International Biosphere Region, as designated by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO);

- Assumed the administration of the Pinelands Development Credit Bank, which is the processing agency for one of the oldest and most successful transfer of development rights programs in the world;

- Completed and/or launched numerous scientific studies, including several ongoing research projects on rare snakes;

- Installed, dedicated and opened the Candace McKee Ashmun Pinelands Education Exhibit, which features more than 400 square feet of displays that will be used to raise awareness and appreciation of the Pinelands for decades to come;

- Overhauled the agency's website so that is easier to navigate and to provide the public with far greater access to Commission documents, such as resolutions, meeting minutes, development application information, and links to livestreamed Commission meetings.

- Completed an application that resulted in the successful designation of the Pine Barrens

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Byway as a National Scenic Byway; and

- Persevered during the COVID-19 pandemic by immediately taking steps to ensure that the Commission can continue to achieve all of its work remotely.

Prior to joining the Pinelands Commission, Ms. Wittenberg served as the Assistant Commissioner of Climate and Environmental Compliance for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), a position she held since May 2006. Ms. Wittenberg served as the Director of Environmental Affairs for the New Jersey Builders Association from August 1994 to April 2006, providing technical support, training and guidance to the Association's membership relative to environmental, land use and other related matters. She served as the Director of the Division of Environmental Quality for the NJDEP from November 1990 to August 1991, a position in which she oversaw 400 employees who are responsible for State programs that cover air quality planning, enforcement and permitting, radiation protection, pesticides, emergency response, release prevention, right to know, and the analytical laboratory. Ms. Wittenberg served as the NJDEP's Director of the Office of Energy from August 1991 to 1994. In that position, she directed all activities related to the State's energy policies and programs that included the development and implementation of the State Energy Master Plan. Prior to being employed by the NJDEP, she worked as the Assistant Vice President of Health and Safety for the Triborough Bridge & Tunnel Authority in New York City and as a Director, Manager and Environmental Specialist with the New York City Transit Authority. Ms. Wittenberg earned a master's degree in environmental engineering from Duke University and a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Vermont.

The Pinelands Commission is an independent state agency that is governed by a 15-member board of directors. It is charged with protecting the 938,000-acre state Pinelands Area, which includes parts of Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Ocean counties. The Executive Director is responsible for the daily operations of the Commission and its staff of approximately 40 planners, scientists, environmental reviewers, educators and others.

Prior to her passing, Ms. Wittenberg took a leave of absence and designated Susan R. Grogan, the Commission's Planning Director, as the Acting Executive Director.



Above: Nancy Wittenberg, right, attending her first meeting as the Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission in 2011.

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