



New Jersey Pinelands Commission PRESS RELEASE

February 4, 2008

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Comments on the passage of Franklin E. Parker, who served as the first Chairman of the New Jersey Pinelands Commission:

NEW LISBON, N.J. – It is with great sadness that the New Jersey Pinelands Commission acknowledges the passage of Franklin E. Parker, who served as the first chairman of the Commission from 1979 to 1988. Mr. Parker passed away on Friday, February 1.

“Frank Parker was one of the great citizens of New Jersey, the United States and the planet,” Commission Chairperson Betty Wilson said. “The Pinelands Commission and the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan owe their very existence to his leadership.”

“Franklin Parker was one of the chief architects of the Pinelands protection effort,” added John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the Commission. “As the Commission’s first chairman, he guided the agency from its infancy with remarkable skill, patience and resiliency, all in an effort to ensure that the Pinelands protection program was built on solid ground.”

A resident of Mendham, Morris County and a graduate of the University of Virginia Law School, Mr. Parker used his legal expertise to help preserve open space. His involvement in conservation issues began in the 1960s when he and other Morris County residents organized to fight a proposal to turn a valuable wetlands and wildlife habitat into a regional airport. His efforts helped create the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, which contains 7,600 acres of swamp woodlands, upland forests, and marshes in Basking Ridge, New Jersey. Mr. Parker also served as a trustee on numerous nonprofit, land-conservation organizations.

In 1978, Congress passed the National Parks and Recreation Act, which designated 1.1 million acres of New Jersey’s Pinelands as the country’s first National Reserve. The following year the New Jersey Legislature passed the Pinelands Protection Act, which authorized the creation of a 15-member Commission comprised of federal, state and local representatives to devise and implement a land-use plan to protect the region and its unique natural, cultural and historic resources. Then-New Jersey Governor Brendan T. Byrne selected Franklin E. Parker to direct this critical task as Chairman of the Commission.

Under Mr. Parker’s watch, the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan, the rules that govern land-use, development and resource protection in the million-acre Pinelands preserve, was developed and adopted in 1981. The Pinelands protection effort is now considered among the most successful land-use and natural resource protection programs in the country.

“He never let acrimony take place on the Commission, nor did he let anyone politicize anything that we were doing,” Candace McKee Ashmun, who has served as a member of the Pinelands

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Commission since its inception in 1979, said of Mr. Parker. “From the start, he said we were all one Commission trying to get to one place. He set the tone, and it lasted. What also struck me is that he never gave up. He stayed there until everything was done and was done right.”

In more recent years, Mr. Parker was active in working with the Trust for Public Land on land conservation projects.

Mr. Parker served as the first president of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, a nonprofit land conservation organization. In 2003, the foundation purchased a 9,400-acre property in the heart of the Pinelands in Woodland Township, Burlington County, and dedicated the site as the Franklin Parker Preserve. In addition, Mr. Parker was inducted into the Pinelands Preservation Alliance’s Pine Barrens Hall of Fame in September 2006.

ATTENTION EDITORS: Photos of Mr. Parker are available by contacting Paul Leakan (609) 894-7300 or at info@njpines.state.nj.us. Photos can be sent via e-mail.

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