



New Jersey Pinelands Commission **PRESS RELEASE**

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Pinelands Commission, Wharton State Forest and local students test water quality, learn about Pinelands resource protection during World Water Monitoring Day event

WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP, N.J. – More than 160 students gauged Pinelands water quality and learned about the importance of protecting the region’s unique natural and historic resources during World Water Monitoring Day today.

Sponsored by the New Jersey Pinelands Commission and Wharton State Forest, the event was held at the historic Batsto Village here.

“This event provides students with a tremendous, hands-on experience that helps them discover the critical role that water plays in sustaining a world-class ecosystem that is located right in their backyard,” said Paul Leakan, the Commission’s Communications Officer. “By educating these students about water quality and issues facing water supplies, we can hopefully foster a sense of environmental stewardship and empower these students with the knowledge that they can have a positive impact on an essential resource.”

Approximately 80 students from **Hammonton Middle School in Atlantic County**, 55 students from **Pinelands Regional Junior High in Ocean County**, and 30 students from **Sterling High School in Camden County** obtained and tested water samples from Batsto Lake, which is located in the heart of the Pinelands.

The students measured the levels of pH or acidity in water, as well as water clarity, temperature and dissolved oxygen. Water in the Pinelands is generally undisturbed, has a low pH and low dissolved solids, enabling it to support uniquely adapted Pinelands plants and animals. The students’ findings will be posted on the World Water Monitoring Day Web site (www.worldwatermonitoringday.org), where test results can be compared over time.

In addition to assisting with the water tests, staff from the Pinelands Commission used nets to catch native Pinelands fish, and demonstrated how the Commission protects wetlands, historic resources and habitat for rare plants and animals. The 1.1-million-acre Pinelands National Reserve covers portions of seven counties in South Jersey, and is home to 850 species of plants and nearly 500 species of animals, including more than 130 plant and animal species that are classified as threatened or endangered. The Pinelands Commission is an independent state agency that oversees land-use, development and natural resource protection programs in the Pinelands Area.

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Staff from the Wharton State Forest discussed the region's natural attributes at Batsto's Nature Center.

World Water Monitoring Day is an annual, global event coordinated by the Water Environment Federation and the International Water Association. Beginning on September 18, 2008, people around the globe monitor the quality of their local watersheds and enter their results into an international database. A major goal of this effort is to create an awareness of the importance of protecting the resources upon which our lives depend.

ATTENTION EDITORS: Digital photos of the event can be obtained by contacting Paul Leakan at (609) 894-7300 or info@njpines.state.nj.us.

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