



New Jersey Pinelands Commission **PRESS RELEASE**

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Public hearing set for Kirkwood-Cohansey research plan

(Note to Editors: This is a revised press release. This public hearing was re-scheduled following an earlier postponement)

NEW LISBON, NJ - Marking an important milestone in a major scientific study aimed at bolstering understanding of the 17-trillion gallon Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer, the Pinelands Commission has scheduled a public hearing to receive public input on the project's work plan. The hearing will be held on Thursday October 9, 2003, 7:00 p.m. at the Pinelands Commission headquarters, located at 15C Springfield Road in New Lisbon. The meeting will be held in conjunction with the regular monthly meeting of the Pinelands Commission.

A law passed in 2001 directs the Pinelands Commission to assess and prepare a report on the key hydrologic and ecological information needed to determine how the current and future water-supply needs within the Pinelands area may be met while protecting the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer system and avoiding any adverse ecological impact on the Pinelands area. The aquifer assessment is to be implemented in cooperation with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Rutgers University, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and the United States Geological Survey. The legislation appropriated \$5.5 million from the Water Supply Fund for the preparation of the assessment by the Pinelands Commission.

Beginning in early 2002, scientists from the cooperating agencies and institutions met periodically to design a draft work plan for the Kirkwood-Cohansey Project. The draft was reviewed by a panel of scientists from government and academia, and comments from the review were incorporated into the current version of the work plan. Additionally, the work group completed an analysis to select potential study areas in the Pinelands where the relationship between key hydrologic and ecological attributes will be characterized.

The work plan addresses two major research questions. First, what are the probable hydrologic effects of groundwater diversions from the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer on stream flows and wetland water levels? Second, what are the probable ecological effects of induced streamflow and groundwater-level changes on aquatic and wetland communities? Under the proposed approach to answering these questions, hydrologic and ecological models will be developed and linked to evaluate the possible ecological effects of different water-diversion scenarios.

The Kirkwood-Cohansey Project Work Plan is available for public inspection and copying at the principal offices of the Pinelands Commission. Anyone interested in giving testimony or obtaining further information may call the Pinelands Commission office at (609) 894-7300 by October 9, 2003. It is requested (but not required) that anyone presenting oral testimony at the public hearing also provide a copy of any prepared text to the hearing officer at the hearing. Written testimony may also be submitted at the hearing or sent directly to the Pinelands Commission office, 15 C Springfield Road, P.O. Box 7, New Lisbon, New Jersey 08064, no later than October 9, 2003.

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