



New Jersey Pinelands Commission **PRESS RELEASE**

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Pinelands Commission Discovers Pine Snake at Sanctuary Site *Threatened snake, eggs rescued from collapsed nest*

NEW LISBON, NJ - During a special meeting of the Pinelands Commission today, Executive Director Annette Barbaccia announced that the Commission has confirmed the presence of the threatened Northern Pine Snake (*Pituophis m. melanoleucus*) on the site of The Sanctuary housing development in Evesham Township, Burlington County.

During regular Pine Snakes surveys at the site, Pinelands Commission scientists discovered an underground nest on Wednesday. A follow-up inspection, showed that the burrow had been extensively damaged by a motor vehicle. On Thursday, working in close consultation with the Department of Environmental Protection's Endangered and Non-game Species Program, Commission Chief Scientist Robert Zampella and Commission scientist Kim Laidig carefully excavated the nest to discover an adult female Pine Snake that had been pinned in the collapsed burrow and a clutch of ten eggs. To ensure their safety, the adult snake was subsequently released in an adjacent wooded area and the eggs were removed for incubation.

Additionally, during excavation of the nest, two sets of previously hatched eggs were also found. Commission scientists believe those eggs were hatched in a previous year or in previous years.

Last October, a State wildlife biologist discovered a dead juvenile Pine Snake at the site, apparently killed by a motor vehicle. Because it was late in the season, when many snakes are moving toward winter denning sites, the Pinelands Commission was unable to accurately determine whether the area was in fact Pine Snake habitat. As a result, the Commission pledged to conduct a thorough and systematic survey throughout the spring and into early summer to determine if Pine Snakes live in the area.

Barbaccia said, "We will carefully review the facts surrounding this find and work closely with the Department of Environmental Protection to determine all legally appropriate measures to protect the Pine Snakes."

The Sanctuary is also home to a native population of endangered Timber Rattlesnakes (*Crotalus h. horridus*). The rattlesnakes were discovered after the subdivision had been partly constructed, and were the subject of a subsequent settlement. The settlement included allowing construction of 197 144 [corrected 08/12/02] additional homes, the permanent protection of more than 1,200 acres of land, funding of a rattlesnake research project and construction of a system of fences and culverts designed to redirect the snakes away from residential properties.

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