



New Jersey Pinelands Commission **PRESS RELEASE**

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Pinelands Commission and New Jersey Department of Education give school districts a list of guidelines to help ensure proper planning of school construction projects

NEW LISBON, N.J. – The Pinelands Commission and New Jersey Department of Education have sent a list of regulatory guidelines to every school district in the Pinelands in an effort to help school officials properly and more efficiently plan school construction projects.

The Commission recently mailed the guidelines to all 48 school districts located within the Pinelands Area, which covers portions of seven counties in Southern New Jersey.

The guidelines were submitted in conjunction with the New Jersey Department of Education. They describe how school districts can plan and design their school facility projects in a manner that avoids conflicts with the relevant zoning and environmental policies of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan, the rules that govern development and land use in the Pinelands.

“These guidelines will provide school districts with important suggestions that they can use early in their planning process, which should help them avoid potential land-use or regulatory conflicts and result in Pinelands-consistent projects that are finished in a more orderly and efficient manner,” said John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission.

The guidelines include details on the process for gaining the necessary approvals for expansion or construction at existing school facilities as well as the siting and construction of new school facilities in the Pinelands. The location of educational facilities in the Pinelands is governed by the land use policies of the Comprehensive Management Plan. The policies are implemented through municipal zoning ordinances that have been approved by the Pinelands Commission.

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The guidelines, for example, recommend that school districts contact the Pinelands Commission's Land Use Office early in their planning process and request assistance in identifying one or more Pinelands-consistent sites on which to build a new school facility. By identifying sites that are likely to meet Pinelands land use and development requirements, school districts can avoid sites that are likely to raise major land use or regulatory hurdles and significantly delay or hinder the process for siting a school facility.

In addition, the guidelines make note of requirements regarding public sanitary sewer systems, wetlands buffers and stormwater management in the Pinelands, as well as the special protection afforded to rare plants and animals. The Pinelands is home to 44 threatened or endangered species of animals and approximately 90 threatened or endangered species of plants. In cases where a proposed site has suitable habitat for one or more rare plants or animals, a field survey may be required to determine whether a particular project may impact the critical habitat onsite.

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