

The New Jersey Pinelands: A Natural Treasure

Featuring some of the largest unbroken tracts of forest in the Eastern U.S., the New Jersey Pinelands is a truly special place.

Its vast unbroken forests of pine, oak, and cedar make the



A kayaker paddles on the Batsto Lake in the Pinelands.

Photo/Paul Leakan

Pinelands the largest tract of open space on the mid-Atlantic coast, yet it is found in the most urbanized state in the nation.

Here a visitor can search shady cedar swamps for the rare curly grass fern or hike through a forest of “pygmy” pines no

taller than a man.

Slow moving streams fed by a huge underground aquifer system supply the marshes and bays of southern New Jersey with some of the cleanest drinking water in the world.

In 1978 and 1979 Congress and the State of New Jersey passed legislation to protect the Pinelands and its unique natural and cultural resources.

The 1.1-million-acre Pinelands, which covers portions of seven counties in southern New Jersey, is our country’s first National Reserve.

In 1983, the Pinelands was designated as a Biosphere Reserve by the U.S. Man and the Biosphere Program and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. This designation means, simply, that the Pinelands is an example of the world’s major ecosystem types.

The Pinelands is underlain by aquifers containing 17 trillion gallons of some of the purest water in the land – enough water to cover all of New Jersey 10 feet deep and equal to nearly half the water consumed each year in the United States.

Wetlands compromise approximately 35 percent of the Pinelands National Reserve, including Atlantic Cedar swamps, hardwood swamps, pitch pine lowlands, savannahs and coastal marshes.

Approximately 277,000 people live in the Pinelands Area, which encompasses 1,449 square miles or 19 percent of the total area of New Jersey. More than 50 percent of the land is now permanently preserved. Eighty-four percent of New Jersey’s total forest area is located in the Pinelands.

Residents and visitors alike marvel in the subtle beauty of the expansive mosaic of pine and oak forests that dominate the landscape, including the 15,000 acre Pine Plains, a unique stand of dwarf, but mature, pine and oak trees. The Pine Plains make up the most extensive pygmy pine forest of its type in the United States.

Wildlife abounds throughout the Pinelands. Eight-hundred and fifty plant species and nearly 500 animal species can be found in the region, including dozens of rare, threatened or endangered plant and animal species, which are afforded special protection in the Pinelands. The Pine Barrens tree frog, a



The colorful Pine Barrens tree frog is a threatened animal species that lives in the Pinelands.

Photo/John Bunnell

species that is widely associated with the unique natural history of the Pinelands, is found in very few places outside the Pinelands.

The area is noted by botanists worldwide for its unique native flora. The region boasts 27 species of wild orchids, several insect-eating plant species and some plant species that are currently found nowhere else.



Swamp Pink, a threatened plant species, grows in the Pinelands.

Photo/John Bunnell

More than two dozen sites in the Pinelands are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, including restored historic villages and settlements, town historic districts, and historic structures and ruins.

Agriculture is a key part of the Pinelands economy and is recog-

nized in the federal and state Pinelands legislation as an industry of special significance. With nearly all of the State’s cranberry and blueberry production located in the Pinelands, New Jersey traditionally ranks among the top producers of cranberries and blueberries nationally. Vegetable farming, fruit orchards, roadside produce stands, horticulture, nursery, viticulture/winemaking are all major components of the Pinelands agricultural industry.

Other important or traditional economic activities include forestry, sand and gravel mining and shellfishing.

The Pinelands offers abundant recreational opportunities,



Pinelands farms produce about 40 million pounds of cranberries each year.

Photo/John Bunnell

Maurice National Scenic and Recreational River. On average, there are approximately one million visits to state forests in the Pinelands each year.



Historic buildings at the Batsto Village in the Pinelands.

Photo/Paul Leakan

including canoeing, kayaking, camping, hiking and biking. Two Pinelands river systems are part of the National Wild and Scenic River System: the Great Egg Harbor National Scenic and Recreational River and the

The Pinelands Protection Program

The Pinelands is protected and its future development is guided by the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan. The Plan is administered by the New Jersey Pinelands Commission and units of local, state and federal governments.

The Pinelands Commission is governed by fifteen members. Seven are appointed by the Governor, and one is appointed by each of the seven counties within the Pinelands. One member is appointed by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. The gubernatorial appointees are subject to the review and consent of the New Jersey Senate. Members of the Commission serve staggered three-year terms and are uncompensated for their service. The full Commission meets monthly.



The Executive Director of the Commission oversees a staff of about 60 planners, environmental reviewers, scientists, analysts and others.

Administered by the Commission, the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan contains the rules that govern land use, development and natural resource protection in the Pinelands Area.

The regulations and standards set forth in the Plan are designed to promote orderly development of the Pinelands so as to preserve and protect the region's significant and unique natural, ecological, agricultural, archeological, historical, scenic, cultural and recreational resources.

A cornerstone of the Plan is the creation of different land use areas that are based on an assessment of environmental resources and existing land use patterns.

The Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan Land Capability Map establishes nine land-use management areas with goals, objectives, development intensities and permitted uses for each. These are implemented through local zoning that must conform with the Pinelands land-use standards.

Below are the generalized descriptions of each management

area. The map is located below.

Preservation Area District: This is the heart of the Pinelands environment and is the most critical ecological region. It is a large, contiguous wilderness-like area of forest that supports diverse plant and animal communities and is home to many threatened and endangered species.

Forest Area: Similar to the Preservation Area District in terms of ecological value; this is a largely undeveloped area that is an essential element of the Pinelands environment.

Special Agricultural Production Area: These are areas primarily used for berry agriculture and horticulture of native Pinelands plants.

Agricultural Production Area: These are areas of active agricultural use, generally upland field agriculture and row crops, including adjacent areas with soil suitable for expansion of agricultural operations.

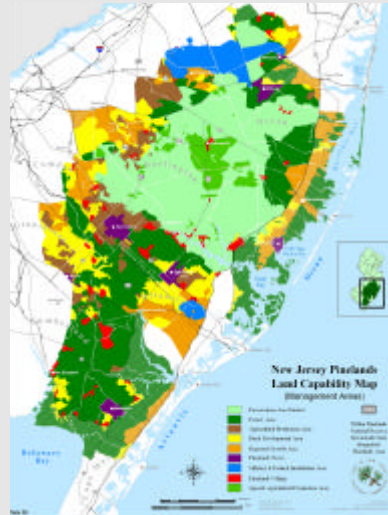
Rural Development Area: This is a transitional area that balances environmental and development values between conservation and growth areas.

Regional Growth Areas: These are areas of existing growth and adjacent lands capable of accommodating regional growth influences while protecting the essential character and environment of the Pinelands.

Pinelands Towns: Six large, spatially discrete settlements.

Military and Federal Installation Area: Federal enclaves within the Pinelands.

Pinelands Villages: Forty-seven small, existing and spatially discrete settlements that are appropriate for infill residential, commercial and industrial development compatible with their existing character.



For more information about Pinelands protection or Pinelands education materials, please contact the Pinelands Commission at P.O. Box 7, New Lisbon, NJ, 08064, or (609) 894-7300, or log on to www.nj.gov/pinelands.

New Jersey Pinelands Commission

