



New Jersey Pinelands Commission **PRESS RELEASE**

October 21, 2010

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Pinelands Commission, Wharton State Forest and local students test water quality, learn about Pinelands 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 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.

"We are thrilled to educate these outstanding students about the importance of protecting a natural treasure that cleans our air and is home to a vast, but sensitive supply of clean water," said Paul Leakan, the Commission's spokesman. "These students represent the next generation of New Jersey citizens, and we hope to empower them with the knowledge that they can help protect the environment for future generations."

Approximately 80 students from **Hammonton Middle School in Atlantic County**, 50 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 worked with students to catch native Pinelands fish, and they 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. Staff members of the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve discussed one of Batsto Lake's slimiest inhabitants: American Eels.

Meanwhile, staff from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) freshwater and coastal monitoring programs sampled the lake for bugs and insects, providing details about what the presence of certain insects can tell them about local water quality. They also highlighted the important link between the upland watersheds and the State's coastal resources, using a live display tank with some of the saltwater species that depend on the quality of water flowing into coastal estuaries.

"Protection of our water resources is a shared responsibility," said DEP Commissioner Bob Martin. "Water monitoring information collected by our partners in local and state government as well as environmental groups and the general public is critical to effective monitoring and protection of New Jersey's waters. Public participation in water monitoring activities helps all of us understand how our everyday actions affect the quality of our waterways."

World Water Monitoring Day is an annual, global event coordinated by the Water Environment Federation and the International Water Association. 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: High resolution, 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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