

SOUTHERN PINELANDS NATURAL HERITAGE TRAIL NARRATIVE (Final version - 12/9/04)

Historical Perspective

The New Jersey Pinelands is a natural and cultural environment unique in all the world. As sea levels dropped and a portion of the Atlantic coastal shelf emerged approximately five million years ago, a series of geological, geographical, climatological and other phenomena came together in what is now known physiographically as the Outer Coastal Plain of New Jersey - the Pinelands. Sandy soils predominated, but with scattered pockets and layers of various clays, gravels and marl. These soils were generally extremely porous and consequently could retain only low levels of nutrients. Underlying them were great deposits of a soluble form of iron, known as limonite, that played a major part in the subsequent history of the region. Being a flat, low-lying plain with a vast aquifer beneath, the Pinelands possessed a water table that was in most areas either just below ground level or just above. While the lack of topographic barriers prevented the creation of ponds and lakes, extensive swamps developed over broad expanses of the landscape. Much of this slowly circulating water would have been frozen most of the year during the Wisconsin Period (the most recent glaciation, which ended about ten thousand years ago; the glaciers only reached as far south as central New Jersey), when the climate was much colder than today, and the native vegetation would have been starkly different.

Once the glaciers to the north retreated and the periglacial climate warmed, the modern flora and fauna of the Pinelands began to invade. Situated as it was along the mid-Atlantic coast, the region attracted species from both north and south, which commingled here as nowhere else. Hybrids of plant and animal species native to more northerly and more southerly climates developed under the unusual local conditions. Over the centuries, as generations of these variant species decayed, a thin, organic duff formed and the abundant waters of the Pines became more acidic. The waters penetrated to the iron bearing strata below, carrying the mineral to the surface where it accumulated as a hardened crust along the banks of the languid streams. The unprecedented combination of high acidity, organic materials and dissolved iron resulted in the famous "tea colored" water of the Pinelands.

As the glaciers withdrew and the land became more hospitable, the first human inhabitants of the Pinelands arrived, perhaps ten thousand years ago or more. Their life was, at least initially, not an easy one. They probably encountered a tundra-like environment, which only gradually became more diverse over succeeding millennia. Over time though, the climate became more pacific and comestibles more plentiful and, as a consequence, their numbers grew. The tool kit they employed and their ephemeral encampments, now represented only by small concentrations of stone tools and hearth stains scattered across the landscape, reflected this change. The implements they used evolved over time in response to the slowly changing environment and the subsistence diet it afforded. A faint reflection of the lives of these ancient peoples can be observed at the more than one thousand locations in the Pinelands where traces of their way of life have been reported by farmers, fishermen and archaeologists.

By the time Europeans arrived, this unique ecological zone had been fully formed in its modern configuration for at least seven to eight millennia. The land was criss-crossed with a dense,

dendritic pattern of rivers, creeks and small streams. Pitch pine and oak upland forests seemed to stretch endlessly in all directions, interspersed with cedar and hardwood swamps; all of it was filled with exotic floral species never before encountered. The unorthodox surroundings presented both opportunities and limits to the newcomers, but the limits were more immediately apparent. The sandy soils were not promising for agriculture and this prevented full-scale clearing and settlement for more than a century after the rest of the colony. In fact, the Pinelands was never settled as intensively as the rest of New Jersey. The colonists settled along the coast and on the Inner Coastal Plain, the narrow strip of more fertile land nearer the Delaware River. Forays into the Pinelands for wood, game, fur and other resources were common in these years and river landings were well established by the mid-eighteenth century. Yet the region remained distinctly underpopulated, at least until furnaces and forges were built in the interior in the latter 1700s to exploit the potential of the seemingly limitless supply of limonite iron. Thereafter, a rural version of the Industrial Revolution took hold as iron smelting was followed by glass production and other, more modest manufactories. Like iron casting, glassmaking was another specific response to the natural conditions, the abundant local sands being high in silica and ideal for the production of window glass and hollow wares. Unfortunately, these pursuits put a tremendous strain on the native environment, particularly the forests, which were relentlessly harvested to sate the voracious appetite of the iron and glass furnaces.

In the end, however, due to a mix of economic, technological and social forces, industry in the Pinelands ebbed and a gradual depopulation occurred in the mid to latter nineteenth century as people sought gainful employment elsewhere. The Pines were allowed to slowly recover and the forests reclaimed much of their prior domain. The remaining human population supported itself with more environmentally compatible activities, such as berry farming, small-scale colliering (the making of charcoal) for home heating and “working the cycle” (seasonal harvest of the natural bounty). The outcome was an environment that restored itself according to the gamut of nature - soil, climate, hydrology and the like - and a human subculture that had developed over three centuries in response to those conditions. The people had settled where the land welcomed them and took what the land gave. As a result, their culture evolved with its own economic, social, and settlement patterns and even, to some extent, its own architecture. Like the natural environs to which it was adapted, this subculture was unique and distinctive from that of the rest of the eastern seaboard. Remnants of this now vanished way of life remain along the proposed byway and are available for the edification and education of Pinelands visitors.

Thus, the Pinelands has not been a static, immutable environment. A tundra, or perhaps a boreal forest, ten thousand years ago, it changed enormously in the succeeding five or so millennia, primarily due to climatic conditions. Relatively stable for several thousand years thereafter, it changed again, and in a much more accelerated fashion, as a result of human agency, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Since then, the region has largely, but not completely, regained the diverse range of plant and animal species and the unbroken forested tracts that were familiar to ancient Native Americans. However, much of the land, particularly in the southern tier of the Pines, has been permanently adapted for various agricultural pursuits. While not ideal for cereal crops, the region has supported truck farms since at least the early nineteenth century and berry farms became common a few decades later. Various ethnic groups have also been able to introduce their traditional farm products - Germans and Italians established wineries south of the Mullica River after the railroads were built in the 1850s and Eastern European Jews started a

network of farms not long thereafter that flourished well into the twentieth century. Large swaths of the southern Pinelands are thus cleared and present pleasing rural vistas to visitors along the proposed byway. This mixture of pristine natural environments and lands adapted for benign and compatible agriculture figured significantly in the United Nations declaration in 1983 proclaiming the Pinelands to be an International Biosphere Reserve.

Byway Route

Often described as the last unbroken natural area in the northeastern megalopolis, the Pinelands presents an unparalleled experience and educational opportunity. The proposed byway route is dotted with small farm fields, pastures, and river towns and punctuated by eccentric historical ruins, such as the paper mill built over the iron furnace at Weymouth (Hamilton Township) and the World War I munitions complex in the oak/pine woods at Belcoville (Estell Manor City and Weymouth Township). At night the lightly settled byway is a stargazer's paradise (Belleplain State Forest in Dennis Township is a favorite venue of the South Jersey Astronomy Club) and during the day it provides sights and points of interests for a wide variety of tastes. It is also easily accessible to a huge pool of potential vacationers and day-trippers, surrounded as it is on all sides by New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore/Washington, and the heavily developed Jersey shore.

The four "corners" of the byway are Dennisville in Dennis Township, Cape May County; Port Elizabeth in Maurice River Township, Cumberland County; Nesco and Wescoatville in Mullica Township, Atlantic County; and Tuckerton Borough in Ocean County. These four small settlements are visually quite different from each other, but each is in its own way a characteristic Pinelands community. Most of Dennisville is listed on the New Jersey and the National Registers of Historic Places and is among the best preserved of the agricultural and maritime hamlets that ring the Delaware Bay. Port Elizabeth is an eighteenth-nineteenth century river town and glasshouse site *par excellence*. It is one of a string of similar historic communities - including Bricksboro, Mauricetown, Dorchester and Leesburg - that hug the lower Maurice River system in close proximity to each other; all are within a mile or so of Delsea Drive (State Route 47). Nesco-Wescoatville is a linear community along Atlantic County Route 542 in a heavily agricultural area of Atlantic County. It, too, was the site of a glassworks, the Columbia glasshouse, in the nineteenth century and of the Indian Cabin Mill Inn (still extant) prior to that, where legend has it that the notorious Revolutionary War brigand and Tory Joe Mulliner was finally captured by the Continental militia. His miscreant tenure was then brought to an abrupt conclusion by means of a hangman's noose. Tuckerton, near the mouth of the Mullica River, is another early Pinelands settlement and, long ago, a bustling port of entry into the United States where charcoal and other products of the interior were exported to market. An outpost of fashion and fineries two hundred years ago, Tuckerton inspired travelers to remark on the crowds and the intense level of commerce there. Along with Dennisville and Port Elizabeth, the town was also very active in shipbuilding, a prominent Pinelands industry from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.

The byway constitutes two oval loops, a northerly and a southerly, connected by a north-south thoroughfare through the heart of Atlantic County (from Corbin City in the south to Nesco-

Westcoatville in the north). From Dennisville, the southern loop of the byway describes a rough circle, wending its way west and then north along Delsea Drive (State Route 47), a ribbon of history, to Port Elizabeth and the other villages along the Maurice River. Here the route turns east past the Peaslee Wildlife Management Area for a while (*along Weatherby Road/Cumberland County Route 548*) to the Cumberland County-Atlantic County border at State Route 49, where the traveler has a choice of two attractive alternatives. One path continues east along either bank of the Tuckahoe River (*along the south bank, State Route 49 to Marshallville Road/Cape May County Route 632; along the north bank, State Route 49 to Head of River Road/Aetna Road/Atlantic County Route 649 to Main Street/Atlantic County Route 611 in Corbin City to State Route 50*) to the settlements of Corbin City and Tuckahoe. The other completes the circle by turning south to the small, isolated community of Belleplain in Dennis Township, then on eastward to Woodbine, a utopian agricultural community founded by a German aristocrat, Baron DeHirsch, for the benefit of oppressed European Jews, and finally south back to Dennisville.

From Tuckahoe the byway proceeds almost due north, passing just east of the ruins of Walker's Forge in Weymouth Township and just west of the Great Egg Harbor Wildlife Management Area, to Mays Landing (State Route 50), a prominent eighteenth century river port in Hamilton Township. The byway then continues northwest past mill ruins, blueberry fields and the Makepeace and Hammonton Creek Wildlife Management Areas to Nesco-Wescoatville (*Weymouth Road/Atlantic County Route 559 to Weymouth-Elwood Road/Atlantic County Route 623 to Columbia Road/Atlantic County Route 658*), and then east to Pleasant Mills, where the Nescochague Creek drains into the Mullica River (*Nesco Road/Atlantic County Route 542 becomes Bridgeport Road/Burlington County Route 542*). Here begins the northern loop of the byway. The route courses further east on both the north and south banks of the Mullica (which includes a New Jersey Register of Historic Places historic district from its mouth west to Batsto). On the south, it brings the traveler to the charming and well preserved settlement of Port Republic and then to the composite historic village of Smithville in Galloway Township (*Elwood-Pleasant Mills Road/Atlantic County Route 623 becomes Weekstown-Pleasant Mills Road/County Route 643 to Philadelphia Avenue/Egg Harbor-Green Bank Road/Atlantic County Route 563 to Clarks Landing Road/Atlantic County Route 624 to Mill Street to Riverside Drive in Port Republic City to English Creek-Port Republic Road/Atlantic County Route 575 to Moss Mill Road/Atlantic County Alternate Route 561*), while, on the north, it passes the historic sites of Batsto and Herman City and over the Wading River to New Gretna, Little Egg Harbor and Tuckerton (*Bridgeport-Batsto Road/Burlington County Route 542 to Wading River-Weekstown Road to Stage Road*). From Smithville there is easy access to the magnificent marshlands of the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge and the Absecon Wildlife Management Area. The route connects between Smithville and New Gretna via the Garden State Parkway, which passes the marinas and boat slips at Chestnut Neck and crosses over the mouth of the Mullica River, presenting motorists with a spectacular view of the river and adjoining salt marshes.

The route of the main trunk of the byway passes through five counties and sixteen Pinelands municipalities, each with its own attractions (and arranged here roughly as they would be encountered along the byway from southwest to northeast). Many of the sites listed below are designated as highlights and destination points on either or both of two federally administered

projects that emphasize the region's natural and cultural assets, the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail and the National Park Service (NPS) Pinelands National Reserve Interpretive Program:

- Maurice River Township - the Maurice Scenic and Recreational River designation (so designated by NPS); historic river port settlements; access to the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, including such points of interest as the Maurice River (East Point) Lighthouse (New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places site); Peaslee Wildlife Management Area (New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail destination); Heislerville Wildlife Management Area; bikeway along Delsea Drive; dykes at Matts Landing; the Maurice River Township Wetland Restoration Site (including a bird watching tower) on Thompsons Beach Rd.
- Dennis Township - Dennisville (New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places historic district); Henry Ludlam House (New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places site); William S. Townsend House (New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places site); Joseph Falkenburg House (New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places site); historic hamlets; Dennis Creek Wildlife Management Area on Jakes Landing Rd.; Dennis Township Wetland Restoration Site; Eldora Natural Preserve (operated by the Nature Conservancy); Lake Nummy State Recreation Area within Belleplain State Forest (which is an official Pinelands National Reserve Interpretive Program destination); open space; baylands
- Woodbine Borough - described as "the first self-governing Jewish community since the fall of Jerusalem," Woodbine is a focal point of south Jersey Jewish history; Sam Azeez Museum of Woodbine Heritage, located in the Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue (New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places site), and two historic Jewish cemeteries (Tifereth Israel and the Synagogue cemetery); Woodbine Municipal Airport (emerging business park); recreational opportunities, including golfing, hiking, biking, horse riding and motocross; Woodbine Developmental Center (with buildings dating from the 1894-1917 Baron DeHirsch Agricultural College)
- Upper Township - Cape May National Wildlife Refuge; Tuckahoe (New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places historic district); early glass making community of Marshallville (New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places historic district); Tuckahoe Railroad Station (New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places site); New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail destinations include the Ocean View Regional Welcome Center (located along the Garden State Parkway), the Tuckahoe Wildlife Management Area and the Peaslee Wildlife Management Area (both of which are New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail destinations) and Corson's Inlet State Park
- Corbin City - Tuckahoe River and a well preserved, nineteenth century river community listed on the New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places as part of the Tuckahoe historic district; Rte. 50 drawbridge over the Tuckahoe River (determined eligible for the New Jersey Register of Historic Places)
- Estell Manor City - Atlantic County Park (with the Estellville glasshouse ruins - a New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places historic district - and a veterans' cemetery) and the Great Egg Harbor Scenic and Recreational River (as designated by NPS); 1792 Head of River Church (New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places site and a New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail destination) and adjoining 1751 Baptist cemetery; Belcoville (World War I ammunition plant) ruins; Tuckahoe Wildlife Management Area, Peaslee Wildlife Management Area and Gibson Creek Wildlife Management Area;
- Weymouth Township - Belcoville workers' housing; Walker's Forge ruins; Great Egg Harbor Wildlife Management Area (New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail destination)
- Hamilton Township - Mays Landing (New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places historic district), including the 1841 Mays Landing Presbyterian Church (individually listed on the New Jersey and the National Register of Historic Places); Gaskill Park (Atlantic County Park in Mays Landing and site of George Wheaton's boatyard in the eighteenth century); Atlantic County Park at Lake Lenape; Atlantic County Park at Weymouth Furnace, where the ruins of a nineteenth century paper mill that succeeded the earlier iron furnace are on display; Makepeace Wildlife Management Area; recreational opportunities, including golfing and boating

- Mullica Township - Hammonton Creek Wildlife Management Area; Green Bank State Forest; Sweetwater area (hotbed of privateering activity during the Revolutionary War); ruins of Pleasant Mills (New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places site); ruins of Amatol (a World War I era armaments manufacturing community)
- Washington Township - Batsto Village (New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places historic district); Wharton State Forest (Pinelands National Reserve Interpretive Program destination); Green Bank State Forest, including the Crowleys Landing Recreation Area; Swan Bay Wildlife Management Area; ruins of Herman City (a glassmaking village where the mason jar was invented in 1858); scenic Mullica River crossing at the historic river landing at Green Bank; cranberry bogs
- Egg Harbor City - Historic German community dating from 1854; Dr. Smith's Sanitarium and serpentine channel (New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places site); Egg Harbor Lake Park; Tuscan House at the Renault Winery (New Jersey Register of Historic Places site); traveler services and recreational opportunities available
- Galloway Township - Smithville, a recreated historic village (includes the Smithville Apothecary, a New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places site); Boling Cemetery (Grand Army of the Republic US Colored Troops); Renault Winery (New Jersey Register of Historic Places site); Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail destination); recreational venues
- Port Republic City - New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places historic district, including the Amanda Blake Store on Main St. (individually listed as a New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places site); Port Republic Wildlife Management Area; Chestnut Neck Battle Monument
- Bass River Township - Wading and Mullica Rivers and associated marshlands, Bass River State Forest (Pinelands National Reserve Interpretive Program destination; New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail destination), which includes the Lake Absegami State Recreation Area; and the historic port town of New Gretna; marinas and boating
- Little Egg Harbor Township - Bass River State Forest; portions of the 115,000 acre Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve (including the Rutgers University Marine Field Station)
- Tuckerton Borough - Tuckerton Seaport Museum, including the Jacques Cousteau permanent exhibit (New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail destination); historic village; 1709 Friends Meeting House and cemetery; marinas, shopping and services for travelers

Byway Theme

The route traverses a landscape of fields, forested lands, bogs, tidal marshes, cedar swamps, and small towns, emphasizing both the natural beauty of the Pinelands and the ways man has adapted the environment over time to suit his purposes. This reinforces the theme of the byway, which might be summed up as **“The Pinelands: An Evolved and Evolving Natural and Cultural Community.”** The theme is meant to capture the sense of the region as a unified and cohesive place - a distinct, identifiable subregion both environmentally and culturally - that is, and always has been, in flux. While man has accelerated that change at times, he has not been its sole agent. In geologic terms it has not been so very long since the region was ocean bottom. Once it emerged, mutation has been seemingly its only real constant. With the repeated advance and retreat of ice sheets, varieties of flora and fauna appeared and disappeared. The topography and hydrology changed over and over again. Even the very size and shape of what is today the Pinelands is not as it once was. If the first Native Americans to view the region had been able to

take wing, they could have soared over dry land fifty to sixty miles to the east of the current coastline. Perhaps they would have seen a rolling, mostly treeless expanse below or possibly a type of northern forest, dominated mostly by species of fir and spruce, that we now associate with northern New England and Canada. In any event, the Pinelands of today would have been nowhere to be seen.

Millennia passed, the climate moderated and the Outer Coastal Plain (the Pinelands) responded. Cold-adapted flora migrated north, to be replaced by Atlantic white cedar, the ubiquitous pitch pine and hybrids of more northerly and southerly species. Human beings entered the equation while this change was occurring. They prospered and multiplied in the increasingly mild environment as their diet benefitted from a greater abundance and variety of game and edible plants. The modern Pinelands and its unique ecosystem eventually emerged, only to be strained by the needs and demands of the newcomers who migrated from Europe, beginning in the eighteenth century. As different as the region of ten thousand years ago would have appeared to the modern eye, vast stretches as they looked in the early 1800s would have been almost equally unrecognizable. Clear-cut to the horizon in some places to provide wood for ships, rural industrial furnaces and home-heating charcoal, the Pinelands only slowly healed itself as other raw materials supplanted pine, oak and cedar and relieved the overtaxed environment. This may not be immediately apparent to visitors to the region, who see what seems to be a timeless forest, but the Pines serves as an object lesson in both the overuse and the eventual restoration and renewal of a natural area.

Intrinsic Qualities of the Byway

The route chosen for the byway celebrates a number of characteristic Pinelands attributes which are identified as qualities qualifying a thoroughfare for inclusion in the New Jersey and National Scenic Byway program. The route passes scenic vistas that are unsurpassed in New Jersey, including the Wading River crossing at the settlement of Wading River and the Mullica River crossings at Green Bank and along the Garden State Parkway. There are also marvelous views of the placid Tuckahoe River and of the almost endless salt marshes at the Delaware Bay (as seen from Delsea Drive). The tranquil beauty of the pine and oak forest is featured at almost every point along the route, but nowhere more so than on Burlington County Route 542, Wading River-Leektown Road and Stage Road (Washington, Bass River and Little Egg Harbor Townships), on Clarks Landing Road in Egg Harbor City and Galloway Township (where tall cedar stands frame the road), on Weymouth-Elwood Road near Makepeace Lake in Hamilton Township and on Weatherby Road in Maurice River Township. It is small wonder that the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, has singled out the region for special attention via the Pinelands National Reserve Interpretive Program and the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail.

The route of the byway is exceptional in New Jersey for its natural beauty and for sightings of rare species. The river crossings, in addition to presenting a sublime vista, sometimes offer an opportunity to view some magnificent wildlife. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has confirmed that there is a bald eagle nesting site in the vicinity of the Wading River bridge on Burlington County Route 542 (Washington and Bass River Townships) and that eagle sightings are not unusual, especially in the winter months. From the vantage point of the

tower in the historic mansion at Batsto, one can view a carpet of green to the horizon in all directions, a vast forest on a scale not equaled anywhere else in the state.

Moreover, historic and archaeological resources abound along the byway. Perhaps best known is the eighteenth-nineteenth century settlement of Batsto, deep in the piney woods of Washington Township, near the banks of the Mullica River. During the Revolutionary War, Batsto possessed an iron furnace and was a center of patriot armament manufacturing so vexing to the British that they attempted an expedition up the Mullica to destroy it. Before withdrawing in the face of superior forces, they massacred a small detachment of Continental troops at the Battle of Chestnut Neck. The battle site and a memorial, near the mouth of the Mullica, are also along the path of the byway. Besides Batsto, the route passes the archaeological remnants of other of the old iron forge and furnace sites of the Pines at Weymouth (Hamilton Township), Walker's Forge (Weymouth Township) and Aetna (Estell Manor City, near Head of River) and the late eighteenth and nineteenth century glasshouses at Port Elizabeth in Maurice River Township, Herman City in Washington Township, Marshallville in Upper Township, Estellville (along State Route 50) in Estell Manor City and again at Batsto.

Historic houses of worship and cemeteries are commonplace by the byway. Too numerous to list here individually, they include the late eighteenth century church at Head of River and an adjoining 1751 Baptist cemetery (Estell Manor City), the Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue and the early nineteenth century Methodist churches at Pleasant Mills (Washington Township), Estellville (Estell Manor City), Belleplain (Dennis Township) and Weymouth (Hamilton Township). This lattermost possesses very rare examples of grave markers made of the native cast iron. A non-sectarian cemetery, and one of proud note and distinction, is the Boling Cemetery in Port Republic City. This small graveyard is the place of final repose of African-American soldiers who served their country during the Civil War. Among the very oldest religious sites in southern New Jersey is the 1709 Friends Meeting House and cemetery in Tuckerton Borough. St. Mary's Roman Catholic cemetery (the church here burned down during a massive wildfire that swept the area in 1903), by Pleasant Mills-Weekstown Road in Mullica Township, contains the graves of Irish and other immigrants (including members of the Fralinger family of Atlantic City salt water taffy fame) who labored in the iron furnace, glasshouse and sawmill at nearby Batsto. Cemeteries in Woodbine and elsewhere in Cape May and Atlantic Counties attest to a singular, but now almost forgotten, link with rural Jewish farmers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The surviving churches and synagogues of the Pinelands tend to be starkly and elegantly simple in their design, symbols of the straightforward faith of their adherents. Many of them are listed on the New Jersey and the National Registers of Historic Places.

Maritime and riverine settlements are another historic and cultural hallmark of the byway. These were centers of commerce, shipping and shipbuilding - and, by the rural standards of southern New Jersey, sophisticated and fashionable places - in the decades after independence. They served as collection and distribution points for goods going to and fro and gave the isolated citizens of the Pinelands a small glimpse of the world outside. They included - in addition to the port-of-entry at Tuckerton - Port Republic, Mays Landing, Tuckahoe, Port Elizabeth, Bricksboro, Dorchester, Leesburg, and Dennisville. While the Revolution was ongoing, commerce of a less restricted sort (i.e., privateering) was a staple of the local economy at Sweetwater (on the Mullica River near Batsto) and at numerous other hidden coves in the Pinelands. The privateers, licensed pirates who split their prizes with the American government, were an important source of

revenue for the Continental Congress and a constant source of aggravation for the British. Many of these old port towns now have marinas and boat put-ins as well as museums, restaurants and shops.

Recreational venues are a regular feature for visitors along the path of the byway and its offshoots. Many of these provide a unique opportunity to learn about the magnificent, but fragile, ecology of the Pinelands and its littoral. The Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (Galloway Township) and the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve (southern Ocean County, including Little Egg Harbor Township and Tuckerton Borough) are two very large, federally designated sanctuaries dedicated to the protection and understanding of coastal environments. The Cousteau preserve, comprising tidal freshwater, brackish and salt marshes and pine-oak upland buffer zones, includes the Rutgers University Marine Field Station in Little Egg Harbor Township and is described as “one of the least disturbed estuaries in the densely populated urban corridor of the northeastern United States.” Further inland, access to a number of state forests is available along the byway, including Wharton State Forest (Washington Township), Green Bank State Forest (Washington Township, Mullica Township), Bass River State Forest (Little Egg Harbor Township, Bass River Township) and Belleplain State Forest (Dennis Township, Maurice River Townships). The Crowley’s Landing Recreation Area is along the banks of the Mullica River in Green Bank State Forest in Washington Township while the Lake Absegami State Recreation Area is located in Bass River State Forest in Bass River Township and the Lake Nummy State Recreation Area is a part of Belleplain State Forest in Dennis Township, just west of Woodbine Borough. Additionally, there is a succession of wildlife management areas all along the route.

The extensive Atlantic County park system abuts portions of the byway alignment, offering historic and archaeological sites as well as opportunities for nature walks, picnicking, boating, canoeing, swimming and camping. Cabins can also be rented at the Atlantic County park at Lake Lenape (Mays Landing, Hamilton Township) and there is a private roller skating rink and amusement park across the lake from the park. Birding is a favorite pastime by the Delaware Bay (e.g., Thompsons Beach Road in Maurice River Township) and at Makepeace Lake (Hamilton Township) and there are osprey nests in the picturesque village of Lower Bank along the Mullica River (Washington Township). Visitors may avail themselves of helicopter rides from the Woodbine Municipal Airport, where the south Jersey chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association meets regularly. The airport itself was built as an Army Air Corps base during World War II. Pleasant and unusual centers for shopping and dining are located in Smithville (Galloway Township), Tuckerton, Mays Landing (Hamilton Township), Tuckahoe (Upper Township) and Corbin City, among other places. Golf courses are only a short ride from the byway, particularly in Hamilton, Galloway and Little Egg Harbor Townships and Woodbine Borough. There are also boat ramps at various points along the major rivers, such as the put-in at the Crowley’s Landing Recreation Area, between Batsto and Green Bank. Canoe rentals are easily available at a number of locations, particularly along Burlington County Route 563 a short distance north of the byway in Woodland and Washington Townships. Access to the Batona Trail for long hikes can also be gained where the trail crosses Burlington County Route 563.

Summary

The route chosen for the southern Pinelands byway avoids the roadside strip development that has occurred along some of the major thoroughfares of the region in favor of well maintained, but less traveled, roads that have been largely ignored in the twentieth century. Along these roads (and the spurs and loops that will branch off from the main trunk of the byway) the entire panorama of the southern Pines unfolds: the broad expanse of salt marshes south and west of Dennisville; the now largely abandoned poultry farms, villages and cemeteries of the Jews who had settled in Atlantic and Cape May Counties by the turn of the century; the still thriving wineries of Atlantic County (including the New Jersey Register of Historic Places Renault Winery in Galloway Township); the echoes of New Jersey's nautical past in places like Tuckerton, Dennisville (Dennis Township), Port Elizabeth (Maurice River Township), Mays Landing (Hamilton Township) and Port Republic; the patches of cedar swamp found near the five major Pinelands drainages that the byway crosses - the Tuckahoe, the Great Egg Harbor, the Wading, the Batsto, and the Mullica Rivers; the wildlife management areas in Port Republic, at Makepeace Lake (Hamilton Township), Hammonton Creek (Mullica Township), Great Egg Harbor (Weymouth Township), Gibson Creek (Estell Manor City), Tuckahoe (Estell Manor City, Corbin City, Upper Township), Heislerville (Maurice River Township), Delmont (Corson Wildlife Management Area in Maurice River Township) and Peaslee (Maurice River Township); the glorious Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge that juts into Great Bay (Galloway Township) and the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve at the mouth of the Mullica River (Tuckerton Borough and Little Egg Harbor Townships); the archaeological remnants of the old glassworks and village at Estellville (Estell Manor City), located in a preserved natural area maintained by Atlantic County, at Port Elizabeth (Maurice River Township) along the Manumuskin Creek and at Herman City (Washington Township), hard by the banks of the Mullica River; the Revolutionary War era iron furnace and nineteenth century settlement at Batsto (Washington Township); the vast blueberry fields along Atlantic County Route 559 (Hamilton Township); and the unbroken pine and oak forests that stretch north from Burlington County Route 563 (Washington Township). Atlantic County also maintains two parks in historic Mays Landing, grassy Gaskill Park in the downtown area and the park at Lake Lenape, which has campsites and nature trails.

The byway and its potential spur routes and loops reflect all these natural and cultural currents. Along the roughly 130-mile stretch of the byway trunk and its major offshoots, visitors will see some of the largest cranberry and blueberry operations in the world; small furnace complexes that made glass and smelted the unusual, renewable iron of the Pines; Revolutionary War sites; animals and plants found nowhere else; two federally designated Wild and Scenic rivers (the Maurice and the Great Egg Harbor Scenic and Recreational Rivers); a pristine, protected estuary at the mouth of the Mullica River; a variety of destination points for the Pinelands National Reserve Interpretive Program and the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail; quaint and picturesque towns with unique shopping opportunities; thousands of acres of state forest land and federally protected natural areas; wildlife management areas at almost every turn; a federally administered marine preserve and research center; and vast tracts of pine and oak forest. All of this can be found within a half-hour's car ride from Jersey shore points and less than an hour from Philadelphia.