



## New Jersey Pinelands Commission **NEWS RELEASE**

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Contact: Francis Rapa

Phone: 609.894.7300

E-mail: [info@npjines.state.nj.us](mailto:info@npjines.state.nj.us)

### **Commission Authorizes Change to Pinelands Land Capability Map**

SOUTHAMPTON, NJ - A proposed change to the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) will amend the Pinelands Land Capability Map to re-designate 4,100 acres of Lacey and Ocean Townships in Ocean County from Pinelands Rural Development Area to the more protective Pinelands Forest Area. The Pinelands Commission voted today to authorize the rule change to better reflect the area's high quality natural resources.

The change was prompted by a report issued by the Pinelands Commission Science Office in March 2004 which showed that the Oyster Creek and Waretown Creek watersheds display the essential ecological character of the Pinelands. However, upon adoption of the CMP in 1980, more than half of the watershed was designated as Rural Development Area due primarily to the presence of the Southern Ocean landfill and its anticipated impacts on water quality. Since that time, significant adverse impacts from the landfill have not occurred.

"Largely undisturbed conditions in the Oyster Creek watershed suggested that a re-examination of the original management area designation was in order," said Pinelands Commission Executive Director John C. Stokes. "It is also now clear that the watershed is habitat for numerous threatened and endangered plant and animal species that were undetected there 25 years ago. Our recent analysis shows that the presence of the landfill was given a disproportionate amount of weight in 1980 and that we need to bring the Pinelands land-use map in line with the ecological value of this area."

A Pinelands Commission analysis determined that the proposed amendment will result in less land disturbance, non-point source pollution and fragmentation of the Oyster Creek landscape. The maximum permitted housing density in the area would change from one unit per 3.2 acres of vacant upland to one unit per 15.8 acres.

Under this proposal, the theoretical maximum zoning capacity, based on gross vacant acres, will decrease from approximately 374 homes to about 184 homes. However, after Commission planners factored in various environmental constraints, such as wetlands, and the lack of accessibility of much of the area to public roads, the effective zoning capacity decreases from approximately 204 homes to about 92 homes.

Today's vote authorizes the Pinelands Commission staff to begin the rule amendment process. A rule proposal is expected to be published in the October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004 edition of the New Jersey Register, which will be followed by a public comment period, including a public hearing. The amendment would likely be adopted in early 2005.

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