



State of New Jersey
THE PINELANDS COMMISSION
PO Box 359
NEW LISBON, NJ 08064
(609) 894-7300
www.nj.gov/pinelands



PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor
SHEILA Y. OLIVER
Lt. Governor

General Information: Info@pinelands.nj.gov
Application Specific Information: AppInfo@pinelands.nj.gov

RICHARD PRICKETT
Chairman
NANCY WITTENBERG
Executive Director

Statement Regarding the Passing of Candace McKee Ashmun, the longest serving member in the history of the New Jersey Pinelands Commission

(May 23, 2020)

The New Jersey Pinelands Commission is deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Candace McKee Ashmun, who volunteered countless hours of her time and expertise while serving as a member of the Commission for more than four decades. Ms. Ashmun died on May 22nd. She was 96.

“The Pinelands has lost a very special champion, Candy Ashmun, who has effectively advocated for its protection so that people could experience its beauty and uniqueness for many generations to come,” said Richard Prickett, the Commission’s Chairman. “Candy was our guide, our institutional memory, and our inspiration. Perhaps no one in the history of our state has done more to safeguard the Pinelands and its world-renowned environment. Her contributions to the Pinelands are immeasurable, and we will miss her immensely.”

The New Jersey Pinelands Commission is a state agency that oversees land-use, development and the protection of the natural and cultural resources of the 938,00-acre Pinelands Area of southern New Jersey. The Commission was created by the passage of the state Pinelands Protection Act in 1979.

A resident of Basking Ridge, Candace McKee Ashmun had served as a gubernatorial appointee on the Commission’s 15-member board since its inception in 1979, making her the longest serving board member in the agency’s history. Commission members are unpaid volunteers who devote a significant amount of their time and expertise while serving.

In 1979, Ms. Ashmun received a call from then Governor Brendan Byrne, asking if she would serve on the newly created Commission, which faced enormous challenges in creating and then carrying out a comprehensive plan for protecting the region’s resources. The Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan is now regarded as one of the most successful, large-scale, land-use conservation plans in the world.

Ms. Ashmun served with great distinction during her tenure as a Commissioner and as a member of numerous Commission committees. Her knowledge of the Pinelands Protection Act and of the Commission’s past decisions were invaluable in the agency’s efforts to strengthen and implement the Comprehensive Management Plan.

During its meeting on December 14, 2018, the Commission adopted a resolution to dedicate the agency’s new educational exhibit in honor of Ms. Ashmun.

The Candace McKee Ashmun Pinelands Education Exhibit features more than 400-square-feet of

interactive displays, a 90-gallon aquarium with native fish, a terrarium with live, insectivorous Pinelands plants and dozens of Pinelands artifacts. Before dedicating the exhibit, several Commission members praised Ms. Ashmun for her contributions to the protection of the Pinelands, adding that the educational displays are a fitting way to build on her incredible legacy.

Ms. Ashmun spent the vast majority of her life volunteering to protect New Jersey's environment. She served on the State Planning Commission and as Executive Director and three-term President of the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions. Ms. Ashmun chaired the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Great Swamp Advisory Committee, and she was a trustee of the Coalition for Affordable Housing and the Environment. She was also a trustee on the Highlands Coalition and served as the Vice Chair of the Board of the Fund for New Jersey. At the local level, she served on the Bedminster Board of Education, Board of Adjustment and Environmental Commission, and served as Vice Chair of the Far Hills Planning Board.

A private consultant to nonprofit organizations, Ms. Ashmun received numerous awards, including the American Planning Association Distinguished Leadership Award. On December 18, 2018, she was among 10 recipients of the Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence.

In 2010, the New Jersey Conservation Foundation named a 4,000-acre property in the Pinelands of Ocean County as the Candace McKee Ashmun Preserve at Forked River Mountain. The permanently preserved property contains habitat for rare Pinelands species such as the threatened Pine Barrens treefrog. When the property was dedicated, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation said Ms. Ashmun is a "single person whose catalytic energy to protect our natural world is nearly as strong as Mother Nature herself."

"Our educational exhibits and the Candace McKee Ashmun Preserve are fitting tributes to someone who did so much to protect the environment for the benefit of all New Jerseyans," Prickett said. "I hope Candy's tireless efforts will inspire future generations to preserve this special place."

**** **ATTENTION EDITORS/REPORTERS:** High resolution photos of Ms. Ashmun can be obtained by contacting Paul Leakan at Info@pinelands.nj.gov, including the photos below:



Above: Candace McKee Ashmun, the longest serving member in the Commission's history, toured the Pinelands exhibit that was dedicated in her honor in December 2018.



Above: Commission staff and current and former Pinelands Commission members joined Candace McKee Ashmun as she toured the Pinelands exhibit that was dedicated in her honor in December 2018.