



New Jersey Pinelands Commission **PRESS RELEASE**

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New Southern Pinelands Natural Heritage Trail receives official designation as State Scenic Byway

WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP, NJ – The new Southern Pinelands Natural Heritage Trail has been officially designated as a New Jersey State Scenic Byway, officials from the Pinelands Commission announced during a special ceremony here today.

Designation of the trail, which was approved by the New Jersey Department of Transportation, enables the Pinelands Commission and the 16 municipalities through which the trail traverses to apply for federal grants. The funds would be used to work with byway stakeholders to develop a Corridor Management Plan for the trail, including a marketing plan, signage and usage studies and strategies for preserving, protecting and maintaining the intrinsic qualities of the trail.

“It is my hope that the trail enables residents and visitors alike to enjoy all that the Pinelands has to offer while also increasing awareness and appreciation of the Pinelands and the need to protect this special part of the state,” Pinelands Commission Chairperson Betty Wilson said during the ceremony at Crowley’s Landing Recreation Area in the Wharton State Forest.

Situated on the banks of the Mullica River, Crowley’s Landing is one of many scenic sites located along the Southern Pinelands Natural Heritage Trail. The 122-mile trail passes through Atlantic, Burlington, Cape May, Cumberland and Ocean counties, including portions of Bass River Township, Corbin City, Dennis Township, Egg Harbor City, Estell Manor City, Galloway Township, Hamilton Township, Little Egg Harbor Township, Maurice River Township, Mullica Township, Port Republic City, Tuckerton Borough, Upper Township, Washington Township, Weymouth Township and Woodbine Borough. Officials in all five counties and 16 municipalities have officially endorsed the trail.

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The trail travels along existing roadways in the southern region of the 1.1-million-acre Pinelands National Reserve. It has a northern loop that traverses the lower Mullica River basin of the eastern Pinelands, a southern loop that travels the Delaware Bayshore region of the Pinelands and a central segment that wends its way through Atlantic and Burlington counties.

The trail passes through parts of the Bass River, Belleplain and Wharton state forests and can be used as a road map that guides visitors to numerous points of interest, such as historic villages, hamlets, churches and schoolhouses as well as marshes, marinas and wildlife management areas.

“In many ways, this trail showcases the abundant treasures in the Pinelands, an area that boasts a natural and cultural environment that is unique in all the world,” Mullica Township Mayor Kathy Chasey said. “This trail will not only create additional opportunities for economic-based tourism activities here in Mullica Township and elsewhere along the trail, it will raise awareness about the importance of preserving and enhancing the natural, cultural and historic treasures in the Pinelands.”

The effort to create a Scenic Byway in the Pinelands is a major outgrowth of the Pinelands Commission’s Rural Economic Development Program. Legislation passed in 1997 appropriated \$250,000 to the Pinelands Commission to help rural communities identify and plan economic development strategies to stimulate environmentally suitable growth. Expert consultants worked with seven municipalities in limited-growth areas in the Pinelands, and a number of potential planning initiatives and projects were identified, including the suggestion for a New Jersey and National Scenic Byway that would bring widespread awareness and appreciation of the natural and cultural assets of the Pinelands.

"As Chairman of the Pinelands Municipal Council and also as Mayor of Woodbine, which lies on the new Southern Pinelands Natural Heritage Trail, I am pleased to be part of the dedication of this long-awaited project that I and the Council have worked so hard to see come to fruition," said Woodbine Mayor William Pikolycky. "Woodbine is now part of not only this Byway but also of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail and the Cape May to High Point Bikeway, all of which connect to the Pinelands in some way."

An image of the map of the trail and photos of various scenes along the trail, are available in jpeg or pdf format and can be obtained by contacting Paul Leakan, the Commission’s Communications Officer, at (609) 894-7300.

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