



New Jersey Pinelands Commission PRESS RELEASE

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Environmentally-sensitive property in Medford Township permanently preserved with money from the Pinelands Conservation Fund

NEW LISBON, N.J. – A 10-acre property located in an environmentally-sensitive area of the Pinelands in Medford Township, Burlington County has been permanently preserved through funds administered by the New Jersey Pinelands Commission.

“This property contains valuable natural resources such as known habitat for endangered timber rattlesnakes, and it will serve as a critical connection that will link the Wharton State Forest with the forested areas of southern Medford and Evesham townships,” said John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the Commission.

The Pinelands Commission has transferred \$100,000 from the Pinelands Conservation Fund to the Rancocas Conservancy, which officially closed on the Medford property on July 31. Funding partners also include the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Green Acres Program and donors to the Rancocas Conservancy.

The property is located on Tansborough Road near Sawmill Road, within the Medford and Evesham Sub-Regional Planning Area. The planning area encompasses a 22-square-mile portion of the two municipalities, and it is home to significant natural resources, including undisturbed sub-watersheds and rare plants and animals. A Sub-Regional Natural Resources Protection Plan was developed for the area as part of a collaborative effort between the Pinelands Commission, Evesham Township, Medford Township and the New Jersey DEP. The plan identified the Medford property as a critical greenway connector linking the Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge with the Rancocas Conservancy’s Wurst Preserve.

“We are not only thrilled to expand our Wurst Preserve, but to also access the Pinelands Conservation Fund at a time when the State’s Green Acres funding has all but run out,” said Barbara Rich, president of the Rancocas Conservancy.

Founded in 1989, the Rancocas Conservancy is a nonprofit, land trust organization that promotes land preservation and water quality protection throughout the Rancocas Creek Watershed. The organization has permanently preserved more than 1,000 acres in the watershed.

The Medford parcel represents the first property to receive money through the Pinelands Conservation Fund. In May, the Commission authorized money through the fund to preserve 450 acres in Atlantic, Burlington, Gloucester and Ocean counties. In September 2007, the Committee approved funding for the preservation of 12 properties. Three other projects are in the process

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of closing and will receive funding this summer.

The Fund was created in 2004 as part of an agreement with the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities to permit the construction and upgrade of an electric transmission line through eastern portions of the Pinelands. Under the agreement, the special fund was established to further the Pinelands protection program and ensure a greater level of protection of the unique resources of the Pinelands Area. The utility that built the transmission lines, Atlantic City Electric (formerly Conectiv), provided \$13 million to establish the Fund.

The Fund is dedicated to three types of projects: \$6 million for permanent land protection (\$4.2 million of which has been allocated); \$3.5 million for conservation planning and research projects; and \$3.5 million to support community planning and design initiatives.

In 2006, the Commission contracted a program facilitator, Conservation Resources Inc. of Chester, N.J., to assist in the development of a land acquisition program and to identify land preservation projects.

***** SPECIAL NOTE TO EDITORS:** A jpeg image of the Medford property can be obtained by contacting Paul Leakan at (609) 894-7300 or info@njpines.state.nj.us.



(ABOVE): The 10-acre property in Medford features known habitat for endangered timber rattlesnakes. Photo/Paul Leakan, NJ Pinelands Commission.