



New Jersey Pinelands Commission PRESS RELEASE

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Photographs available upon request

Pinelands Commission, Wharton State Forest and local students test water quality, learn about Pinelands resource protection during World Water Monitoring Day event

WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP, N.J. – Dozens of students got a hands-on lesson in gauging Pinelands water quality and learned about the importance of protecting the region's unique natural and cultural resources by participating in today's World Water Monitoring Day.

Held at the historic Batsto Village here, the event attracted approximately 120 students who conducted water quality tests while interacting with, and receiving guidance from, staff with the New Jersey Pinelands Commission and the Wharton State Forest.

“In the shuffle of everyday life, it's easy to overlook the natural resources located in our communities and backyards, but today's event opens that window and provides students with the opportunity to experience these resources firsthand,” said Joel Mott, a Public Programs Specialist at the Pinelands Commission. “By doing so, students gain a better appreciation and understanding of why these resources are so important to protect.”

Students from **Pinelands Regional Middle School in Ocean County, Sterling High School in Camden County** and **Haddon Township High School in Camden County** obtained and tested water samples from Batsto Lake, which is located in the heart of the Pinelands. The students measured the levels of pH or acidity in water, as well as water clarity, temperature and dissolved oxygen. Water in the Pinelands is generally undisturbed, has a low pH and low dissolved solids, enabling it to support uniquely adapted Pinelands plants and animals. The students' findings will be posted on the World Water Monitoring Day Web site (www.worldwatermonitoringday.org), where test results can be compared over time.

In addition to assisting with the water tests, staff from the Pinelands Commission used nets to catch native Pinelands fish, demonstrated how archaeology is used to protect cultural resources and how the region's vast and critical water supplies, wetlands and habitat for rare plants and animals are safeguarded. The 1.1-million-acre Pinelands National Reserve covers portions of seven counties in South Jersey, and is home to 850 species of plants and nearly 500 species of animals, including dozens that are classified as threatened or endangered. The Pinelands Commission is an independent state agency that oversees land-use, development and natural resource protection programs in the Pinelands Area.

Staff from the Wharton State Forest fired up Batsto's historic sawmill to demonstrate the vital role of water resources in traditional Pinelands industries, such as forestry. They also discussed the region's natural attributes at Batsto's Nature Center.

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World Water Monitoring Day is an annual, global event coordinated by the Water Environment Federation and the International Water Association. From September 18 to October 18, 2007, people around the globe monitor the quality of their local watersheds and enter their results into an international database. A major goal of this effort is to create an awareness of the importance of protecting the resources upon which our lives depend.

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