

The PINELANDER



The Newsletter of the New Jersey Pinelands Commission Summer 2002

3rd CMP Review Advancing

A series of three panel discussions held during the first half of 2002 brought together some of New Jersey's most respected environmental and government leaders, planners, and others, including a May panel that featured opening remarks by Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Bradley M. Campbell. In delivering the opening remarks, Campbell praised the successes of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) and pledged DEP's support to address the ongoing challenges of protecting the million-acre Pinelands. The forums are part of an intensive year-long review of the CMP that is scheduled to be completed in early 2003.

On January 18, Pinelands Commission Executive Director Annette M. Barbaccia submitted a progress report on the Pinelands CMP to the members of the Pinelands Commission, kicking off the CMP review.

"The periodic plan review ensures that the Plan continues to be a living and workable document that responds to changing conditions, lessons learned and innovations," explained Barbaccia. "It enables the Commission, in concert with other agencies, municipalities,

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(left to right) Pinelands Commission Chairman Jerrold Jacobs presents a check for \$238,494 to Michael Catania, Executive Director of The Nature Conservancy of NJ with George Marinakis, Executive Director of the Cape May County Municipal Utilities Authority.

Commission, Cape May County, The Nature Conservancy Team Up to Protect Pinelands

Permanent protection of ecological resources continues to be a primary focus of the Pinelands Commission. At its May meeting, the Commission presented a \$238,494 reimbursement check to The Nature Conservancy of New Jersey for half the acquisition cost of 382 acres of critical Pinelands habitat in Atlantic and Ocean Counties.

The purchase is the first to be funded under a 1995 mitigation agreement between the Commission and the Cape May County Municipal Utilities Authority (CMCMUA), under which the CMCMUA pledged \$2.25 million in mitigation fees for the acquisition of conservation and recreation lands in the Pinelands National Reserve. In 1999, the Pinelands Commission and The Nature Conservancy

agreed to work together to enhance the program, whereby The Nature Conservancy pledged to administer the project and to match, dollar-for-dollar, funding for lands acquired under the agreement.

"This acquisition demonstrates how government and non-profit agencies can achieve great things by working together and pooling resources," said Jerrold Jacobs, Chairman of the Pinelands Commission. "We're proud to work with The Nature Conservancy to develop a program that provides the maximum flexibility to leverage funding and ensure the most effective use of the available resources."

Four properties in two project areas

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Snakes Alive! Pinelands Commission scientists make important Northern Pine Snake and Timber Rattle Snake discoveries. See stories on Page 5.



New Septic System Requirements Set to Take Effect

The Pinelands Commission has approved new rules establishing a Pilot Program for Alternate Design Wastewater Treatment Systems. The rules, to take effect on August 5, 2002, will result in residential septic systems that are approximately two- to three-times more effective than conventional and pressure-dosing systems in reducing groundwater nitrate pollution. The new systems will be required for new homes on lots smaller than 3.2 acres and in certain other cases where existing septic systems are being replaced.

The Pilot Program is the culmination of a two-year effort by an Ad Hoc Committee comprised of representatives from the Commission, the Pinelands Municipal Council, the New Jersey Builders Association and the Pinelands Preservation Alliance. The Ad Hoc Committee conducted extensive research to identify emerging onsite treatment technologies with the ability to remove nitrate-nitrogen from domestic wastewater prior to its

release to groundwater. The Committee provided guidance in all aspects of the program, from monitoring and compliance to evaluation and selection of the technologies. The Committee was supported in these efforts by Pinelands Commission staff, professional consultants and other experts in the field of advanced onsite wastewater treatment technologies. Engineers and scientists from the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Water Quality provided invaluable technical guidance as well.

Five advanced treatment technologies were selected for the Pilot Program based upon their demonstrated effectiveness at removing nitrate-nitrogen from domestic wastewater prior to discharge to subsurface waters. The Commission will closely monitor the systems during the five-year pilot program to confirm satisfactory system performance.

The five advanced onsite wastewater treatment technologies will replace pres-

sure-dosed septic systems which have been shown by the Commission to be ineffective at removing nitrate-nitrogen from wastewater. Excess nitrates in shallow aquifers used for drinking water pose a serious public health concern and can have ecological impacts as well.

Protection of the Pinelands groundwater resources - specifically, the 17.7-trillion-gallon Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer - is central to protection of all Pinelands natural resources. The Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan has a strong water protection component, featuring water quality standards significantly stronger than those regulating activities outside of the Pinelands. The new septic requirements will further strengthen efforts aimed at meeting and exceeding those standards.

For additional information about the new program, visit the Commission's web site at www.state.nj.us/pinelands, or call Edward Wengrowski at 609-894-7300.

Mayor Kay Chairing Pinelands Municipal Council

At its March 5th meeting, held at the Buena Vista Township Municipal Building, the Pinelands Municipal Council elected its 2002 Executive Committee, nominating Pemberton Township Mayor Thalia C. Kay as the Council's Chairperson. Kay replaces Buena Vista Township Mayor Chuck Chiarello, who announced earlier this year that he would not be seeking the chairmanship after serving in the post for the past six years. Kay previously held the posts of Vice Chair and Delegate at Large.

Also elected to serve on the Executive Committee were: Woodbine Borough Mayor William Pickolycky, who will serve his first term as Vice Chairman; Berkley Township designee Steven R. Ewing, who will serve his 6th term as Secretary; Bass River Township Mayor T. Richard Bethea, who will serve his 6th term as Treasurer; and Mullica Township Mayor Robert Hagaman, who will serve his 3rd term as Member at Large.

"I want to thank Mayor Chiarello for serving this Council so well during the past six years," said Mayor Kay. "Under his steady leadership, we have accomplished a lot of good things to the benefit of the communities and residents of the Pinelands."

Kay has served as Mayor of Pemberton Township for 12 years, and is the Township's first independently elected Mayor, since the Township changed the way it elects a governing body in 1990. Kay is past President of the New Jersey Conference of Mayors, and presently serves as 2nd Vice Chair of the New Jersey League of Municipalities. She also Chairs the League's

General Legislative Committee.

The members of the the Pinelands Municipal Council Executive Committee were sworn in by Assemblyman Nicholas Asselta (Cape May, Cumberland, Atlantic). Assemblyman Asselta, who represents 22 municipalities including seven in the State-designated Pinelands Area, has supported the Pinelands Municipal Council through various legislative efforts.

"I'm looking forward to serving as Chairperson and working with the excellent group of Mayors and designees who represent the Pinelands Municipal Council to ensure that the Pinelands Commission protects not only the region's natural and cultural resources, but the viability of its communities as well," said Mayor Kay. "I am also looking forward to working closely with the Executive Director and staff of the Pinelands Commission to develop innovative solutions to the challenges that lie ahead. We have a lot of work to do, and together we can continue to enhance and protect the high quality of life that we enjoy in the Pinelands."

The Pinelands Municipal Council, created under the Pinelands Protection Act of 1979, is comprised of Mayors or their designees of the 53 municipalities in the Pinelands Area. The Council is empowered to review any changes to the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan, and advises the Pinelands Commission on matters of interest regarding the Pinelands.

CMP Review

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interest groups and the public at-large, to effectively achieve the goals and objectives of the CMP.”

The progress report summarizes the programs, initiatives and accomplishments of the CMP since its inception in 1980. It provides baseline data and serves as a reference document as the Commission evaluates the Plan for possible revisions or creation of new management programs.

Early in the review process, the Pinelands Commission identified two priority issues: permanent land protection; and regional growth areas. These two issues were the subjects of two public panel discussions held in March and April. The panel discussions brought together dozens of experts from the environmental community, business, government and academia to discuss ways to better address the challenges faced in open space acquisition and other permanent land protection strategies, and planning for and managing growth in communities that face intensive development pressures.

The most recent panel discussion, held on May 14, addressed other broader policy issues and opportunities. In addition to Commissioner Campbell, expert panelists included Martin Bierbaum, Deputy Policy Director, Governor’s Office of Policy; and two former Pinelands Commission Chairmen, Richard Sullivan and Daniel Kelleher.

“Each of the three panel discussions was highly constructive,” said Barbaccia. “We were able to garner a lot of very insightful input, not only from a historic perspective, but also with an strong focus on current and future challenges to protecting Pinelands resources.”

Discussion ranged from ways that governmental and non-governmental organizations can work together to protect



Above, DEP Commissioner Bradley M. Campbell addresses the May 14 panel discussion on critical Pinelands issues and opportunities for improvement. Below, panelists listen to Regional Growth Area issues at the April 24th panel discussion supporting the Third CMP Review. Left to right are: Pinelands Commission Assistant Director John Stokes; Hamilton Township Committeeman Thomas Palmentieri; Stafford Township Mayor Carl Block; Joanne Harkins, NJ Builders Association; Creigh Rahenkamp, Builders League of South Jersey; and Susan Ney, Casino Reinvestment Development Authority.



resources more efficiently, to developing better planning, design and zoning standards and practices to preserve and enhance community character, infrastructure planning, cultural and natural resources and overall viability of Pinelands communities.

While the January Progress Report clearly shows that the CMP is achieving its objectives, the review gives the Commission an opportunity to take a fresh look at the Plan and decide what changes may be necessary for its contin-

ued success.

Input from the panel discussions, as well as any comments received from the general public, will be reviewed to identify possible areas for future Commission action. A report will then be issued by the Executive Director in early 2003 that summarizes the findings and recommendations of the CMP review.





The Mullica Watershed Planning Project: What's in it for You?

by *Chris Krupka, Watershed Coordinator, NJ Pinelands Commission*

In the mid-1990's, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) identified 20 watershed management areas (WMAs) in New Jersey. The Mullica River Watershed (WMA #14) is made up of all or part of 24 municipalities in 4 counties (Atlantic, Burlington, Camden and Ocean).

In September 2000, the NJ Pinelands Commission entered into a contract with the DEP to work with a wide variety of organizations and individuals to develop a management plan for the Mullica Watershed. Through this effort, the Commission and its partners are examining water-related issues in the watershed and develop strategies to maintain, restore or enhance water quality, quantity and ecosystem health.

A variety of tools are being used in the watershed planning process, including input from the public and technical and scientific experts, the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan, the Coastal Zone Management rules, and extensive land use and scientific data. In

What is a Watershed? Simply defined, a watershed is the total land area that drains into a particular stream or river. Water from rain or melting snow that runs over and through the land will eventually reach the river. On its way, that water can pick up many different types of materials, including oil, fertilizers, street litter and pet waste — just to name a few! The things we do on the land in a watershed will eventually affect the water.

addition, the Pinelands Commission recently completed a five-year ecological monitoring study in which data was compiled on land use, water quality and fish, frog and plant communities in the Mullica Watershed. This study will be critical to assessing watershed issues and developing the management plan.

The "kickoff" meeting for the project was held in April 2001, at which participants offered their ideas about priority issues and goals in the watershed. Their input laid the foundation for the first Steering Committee meeting in August 2001. The Steering Committee was formed to represent a broad variety of interests in the Mullica watershed, with

input from the general public. Committee members guide the project and make decisions about what steps to take to develop the watershed management plan. This group has already addressed several issues, including the establishment of ground rules to guide the operation and administration of the committee; development of a statement describing the group's collective future vision for the watershed; formation of several Technical Focus Groups to examine specific issues in detail; the addition of new interest groups to the committee; and proposal of Action Now project ideas.

Action Now Projects are short-term projects aimed at improving water quality and advancing overall watershed goals. Examples include education/outreach, land acquisition, development/ implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs), on-site restoration, surveys of activities and/or resources, and technical studies concerning water quality, water quantity and/or ecosystem health. The Steering Committee has developed a "Top Ten" list of Action Now Project ideas which are

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Water, water everywhere. The Mullica River watershed supports a vast network of streams, vernal ponds, wetlands, coastal marshes and impoundments like the one above on a Washington Township cranberry farm.

Rattlesnake Study Yielding Results

Pinelands Commission scientists are confident that a timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus h. horridus*) monitoring project now underway will yield a better understanding of the native Pinelands species' behavior.

In 2001, the Commission and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Endangered and Nongame Species Program entered into an agreement for a three-year study of Pinelands timber rattlesnakes. Under the agreement, the DEP will study the snakes throughout the Pinelands region, while the Pinelands Commission will focus their efforts on a rattlesnake population in southern Evesham Township, Burlington County, looking at the movement and home ranges of the snakes and how they are affected by residential development in the area.

During the 2001 field season, six snakes were implanted with radio tracking devices and their movements tracked by Commission staff. The six snakes spent the active season in pine-oak forests and other undeveloped areas. A portion of the area where the snakes traversed is scheduled for future development. The snakes will be



One of six timber rattlesnakes captured and tracked as part of a three-year study.

redirected away from this area by a system of fences and culverts designed to minimize human/snake interactions. The first season of study also revealed a previously unknown winter denning site bringing the total known dens in the area to three.

Also noteworthy, two of the snakes that were tracked for the study mated in August. Overall, the first season of the monitoring produced good results as the Pinelands Commissions strives to better understand the elusive timber rattlesnake.

Pine Snake Breeding Habitat Identified

The Pinelands Commission has confirmed the presence of the threatened northern pine snake (*Pituophis m. melanoleucus*) on the site of a housing development in Evesham Township, Burlington County, where timber rattlesnakes are already the subject of habitat protection and management efforts.

In June, during regular pine snake surveys at the site, Pinelands Commission scientists discovered an underground nest. A follow-up inspection, showed that the burrow had been extensively damaged by a motor vehicle. Working in close consultation with the DEP's Endangered and Nongame Species Program, Commission Chief Scientist Robert Zampella and members of the science staff carefully excavated the nest to discover an adult female pine snake that had been pinned in the collapsed burrow and a clutch of ten eggs. To ensure their safety, the adult snake was released in an adjacent wooded area and the eggs were removed for incubation.

Additionally, during excavation of the nest, two sets of previously hatched eggs were also found. Commission scientists believe those eggs were hatched in a previous year or in previous years.

Last October, a State wildlife biologist discovered a dead juvenile pine snake at the site, apparently killed by a motor vehicle. Because it was late in the season, when many snakes are moving toward winter den sites, the Pinelands Commission was unable to determine the presence and extent of pine snakes in the area. As a result, the Commission pledged to conduct a thorough and systematic survey during the spring and summer to determine the presence and extent of activity of pine snakes in the area.

The Executive Director has committed to work closely with the DEP to determine all legally appropriate measures to protect pine snakes at this location.

13th Annual Short Course a Success

On Saturday, March 2, more than 200 Pinelands devotees gathered at Richard Stockton State College in Galloway Township for the Annual Pinelands Short Course. At the end of the day, the general consensus of those in attendance was that the 13th annual event was informative, interesting and fun.

Sponsored by the Pinelands Commission and Stockton's Office of Continuing Professional Education, this year's course offered 30 workshops and field trips on many Pinelands topics such as cranberry agriculture, outdoor photography, use of native plants in restoration, Pinelands soils, Pinelands frogs and toads, and wildfire safety. A field trip to Swan Bay Folk Art Center, a Port Republic sheep farm and decoy shop was also offered.

The Short Course was attended by outdoor enthusiasts, local officials, teachers, history buffs and others interested in learning about the Pinelands. The Commission is a registered NJ Department of Education Professional Development Provider.

Pinelands Commission and Stockton College staff are hard at work planning next year's short course, scheduled for March 1, 2003. Anyone interested in receiving the 2003 Pinelands Short Course registration packet can call Betsy Carpenter, Pinelands Commission Public Programs Manager at 609-894-7300.



Participants line up to register for the 13th Annual Short Course.



Mullica Watershed

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currently being developed by Pinelands Commission staff and other watershed partners. A proposal to fund a "Backyard Habitat" program in Galloway Township was submitted to DEP this spring, as a way to help residents conserve water and increase wildlife habitat.

Other major project activities to date include the creation of a brochure, website (www.state.nj.us/pinelands/mullica) and other materials describing the project and facilitating additional public input and communication. A second general public meeting was held in October 2001 to discuss project progress and solicit Action Now project ideas, followed by a second Steering Committee meeting in December 2001. This past spring, the first Technical Focus Groups began to meet. These groups of experts examine scientific and technical issues in the watershed, and provide recommendations to the Steering Committee and other project participants. Commission staff also participate regularly in activities with other WMAs and organizations in the region, and have already initiated an on-site wastewater

Member Organizations of the Mullica Watershed Project Steering Committee

- Atlantic County Dept. of Regional Planning & Development
- American Littoral Society
- Builder's League of South Jersey
- Burlington County Office of Land Use
- Camden County Division of Environmental Affairs
- Chamber of Commerce of Southern New Jersey (invited)
- Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve
- NJDEP – Division of Watershed Management
- NJDEP – Natural and Historic Resources
- NJ Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs
- NJ Forestry Association
- Pinelands Commission Science Advisory Committee
- NJ Water Association
- Ocean County (invited)
- Pine Barrens Canoe Rental
- Pinelands Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Pinelands Municipal Council
- Pinelands Preservation Alliance
- Richard Stockton College of NJ
- Wharton State Forest

management program through an Action Now project.

Together with our watershed partners, the Pinelands Commission will continue to develop Action Now project proposals to address immediate needs in the watershed. Steering Committee and general public meetings will be held on a quarterly basis, with the intention of exchanging information and ideas freely between the two groups. The Technical Focus Groups will work closely with the Steering Committee to provide technical expertise on a variety of issues.

Public participation and education is critical to the success of the management plan, and opportunities for public involvement are incorporated throughout the process. These include educational workshops, public meetings, website updates and a newsletter, "Mullica Watershed Watch," that disseminates information about the Mullica Watershed and the planning project. Commission staff will continue to work closely with everyone involved to promote a clean and plentiful water supply in the Mullica Watershed.

For more information, contact Chris Krupka, Watershed Coordinator, at 609-894-7300 or mullica@njpines.state.nj.us

Pines Commission, Partners Protecting Critical Pinelands Habitat

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have been acquired under the first round of funding. The first is comprised of two parcels totaling 367 acres in the East Pine Plains of Barnegat Township. The Pine Plains region is dominated by a race of four-to-ten-foot-high pitch pine trees that are dependent on forest fires to release seeds. The property is contiguous with the 17,600-acre Stafford Forge Wildlife Management Area and close to the 25,685-acre Bass River State Forest and the 28,224-acre Greenwood Forest Wildlife Management Area.

"We're delighted to partner with the Pinelands Commission to protect New Jersey's natural heritage," said Michael Catania, Executive Director of The Nature Conservancy of New Jersey. "The East Pine Plains Preserve, created, in part, by funds

from this agreement, is a wonderful addition to our Pine Barrens portfolio."

Pinelands Commission Vice Chairman Alan Avery, who represents Ocean County, explained, "The East Pine Plains are a one-of-a-kind landscape and ecosystem. Permanent protection of the area has been a long-standing goal of the County, and this acquisition is a landmark in preserving this special resource.

The other two properties acquired, totaling 15 acres, expand The Nature Conservancy's 340-acre Hirst Ponds Preserve in Galloway Township. The Conservancy began acquiring land in the area in 1984 to protect a pair of large, high-quality Pinelands vernal ponds, which provide critical habitat for Pine Barrens treefrogs and other species.

Located only 15 miles from Atlantic City, the Hirst Ponds Preserve is home to

the globally imperiled wildflower Boykins lobelia (*Lobelia boykinii*). It is also where Hirsts' panic grass (*Panicum hirstii*) was first discovered by Frank and Robert Hirst.

The Pinelands Commission and The Nature Conservancy are working to identify additional acquisition projects under this program. At this time, the Pinelands Commission is anticipating a reimbursement request for a 367-acre purchase in Cape May County.

Additionally, the Pinelands Commission and The Nature Conservancy have recently met to begin work on establishing a \$400,000 grant program to assist non-profit organizations and local governments in acquiring ecologically valuable open space. A provision for the grant program was included as part of the 1999 agreement.



Winslow, Hamilton Selected for Pinelands Growth Project

Two municipalities that support Pinelands Regional Growth Areas (RGA) have been selected by the Pinelands Commission to participate in the Pinelands Excellence Program, a project to assist RGA communities with addressing planning and development challenges. Based on a selection committee evaluation, the Commission designated Winslow Township in Camden County and Hamilton Township in Atlantic County to participate in the program at its June 14 meeting.

Funded by a \$187,000 grant from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the Pinelands Excellence Program is a pilot program to develop prototypical approaches that can enable Pinelands Regional Growth Area communities to effectively absorb growth while maintaining and enhancing a high quality of life. The grant will provide the resources to support a strategic visioning process for each selected communi-

ty. The process will result in the identification of issues and potential recommendations in some or all of the following areas: zoning; subdivision; community facility needs; site planning; and infrastructure improvements.

Prototypes may be developed that address issues such as village centers, neighborhood character, affordable housing, open space and recreation, protection of important natural and scenic features, improved circulation, non-motorized transportation, storm water management and historic and cultural resources.

The two municipalities were selected from proposals submitted by four of the ten municipalities that were eligible to apply for the program. The evaluation committee included Mullica Township Mayor Robert Hagaman, Woodbine Borough Mayor William Pikolycky, Carlos Rodrigues, Acting Director of the NJ Office of Smart

Growth, and Pinelands Commission staff. Mayors Hagaman and Pikolycky represent the Pinelands Municipal Council, an organization comprised of mayors and designees from the 53 Pinelands Area municipalities. The Council, which reviews and advises the Commission on implementation of the Pinelands CMP, was instrumental in guiding the development of the Pinelands Excellence Program.

As Pinelands Excellence Program communities, Winslow and Hamilton will play a key role in the selection of a professional consulting firm to lead the community visioning, planning and design process under the program. The consultant team selected for this project must demonstrate a broad range of expertise in planning and design to address the objectives of the Pinelands Excellence Program.



New Rules Provide Greater Clarity of Soil Removal Requirements

The Pinelands Commission has recently enacted new rules that provide greater regulatory clarity to farmers who engage in soil removal activities. The rules also provide greater environmental oversight in cases where large quantities of soil are removed from farmland.

The new rules were promulgated in response to a number of situations in the Pinelands where large amounts of soil were being trucked from farms. Concerns about these situations were expressed to the Pinelands Commission by municipalities, mining companies and neighbors in the vicinity of the operations in question.

The rule change was developed in close cooperation with the farming community. An Agricultural Extraction Task Force was set up in 1999 by the State Board of Agriculture to work with the

Pinelands Commission and the Pinelands Agricultural Advisory Committee to define which soil removal activities are essential to Pinelands agricultural operations and to clarify the circumstances under which soil can be removed from a farm without triggering the need for a development application to be filed with the Pinelands Commission.

Since their inception, Pinelands rules have exempted from permitting requirements most types of activities connected with agricultural operations. Individuals undertaking off-site soil removal sometimes argued that because the soil removal was connected to an agricultural activity, it was exempt from Pinelands Commission application requirements.

These new rules provide clear definitions of exempt activities and make it

unambiguous to farmers and other property owners what practices are and are not exempted from permitting requirements. This provides more certainty and predictability in the process by directly addressing offsite soil removal as it relates to customary and normal agricultural practices.

The rules also specify thresholds for how much soil may be removed before a permit is required. In cases where agricultural soil removal activities will require permits by virtue of their magnitude, they will be judged by agricultural standards, rather than resource extraction standards intended for commercial mining operations. This will also allow the Pinelands Commission to review these cases to determine whether they are indeed necessary for agricultural purposes.

Commission Exploring Long-term Preservation for Pleasant Mills

By Dr. Barry Brady, Commission Archaeologist

The Pinelands Commission is working with public officials and concerned citizens of Mullica Township to ensure the long-term preservation and maintenance of Pleasant Mills, listed in the New Jersey and the National Registers of Historic Places.

Pleasant Mills is a ruinous, but picturesque, historic factory site on the banks of Lake Nescochague. Milling operations began there in 1752, when the Nescochague Creek was dammed and a sawmill erected. During the Revolutionary War, American privateers under the command of the sawmill's owner, Colonel Elijah Clark, off-loaded their booty there. A half-century later, in 1821, a textile manufactory was built on the site which operated until it was destroyed by fire in 1856. In 1861 the present mill, which produced paper principally from manila rope and jute and occasionally from salt hay, opened for business. Despite fires and the vagaries of the national economy, the mill managed to stay in production until finally closing its doors in April, 1925, after almost 175 years of near-continuous use as a mill seat. In 1952 it was refitted as a summer theater and briefly reborn as the Pleasant Mills Playhouse. Among the young hopefuls who got their start at the playhouse were the well-known television and motion picture actors Tony Perkins and Efrem Zimbalist, Jr.

The mill complex sits on a 6/10-acre lot less than a mile from the Batsto Historic District. In fact, the complex has some historical association with Batsto, principally through common owner-

ship in the 1800s, and was originally entered on the Register as part of Batsto before being individually listed on its own merits. Pinelands Commission staff researched and wrote the successful National Register nomination in 1995 at the request of Mr. Paul Lightman, caretaker of Pleasant Mills at the time.

Concerned about possible long-term deterioration or vandalism at Pleasant Mills, Mullica Township officials contacted the Pinelands Commission last year asking for advice on how to ensure its continued preservation. Commission staff subsequently got in touch with the owner of the site to discuss the matter. The owner, Pax Amicus Castle Theater, a not-for-profit foundation that promotes the dramatic arts, had inherited the mill from Ms. Ada Fenno, a theater patron, but local conditions precluded use of the site for its purposes. Fortunately, the foundation's director and board proved very receptive to the Township's concerns and authorized the Commission to make inquiries about the possibility of state acquisition.

At this point, the Township and the Commission are exploring possible public or private acquisition for eventual management by an appropriate entity and have been joined in the effort by a citizens' group representing the residents of the Lake Nescochague area. The intent is to find a responsible party willing to accept oversight of Pleasant Mills and see to its permanent preservation, perhaps even returning it to a useful life that is in keeping with its unique past and its historic significance.



PO Box 7
New Lisbon, NJ 08064
609.894.7300
www.nj.gov/pinelands/
info@njpines.state.nj.us

Jerrold Jacobs
Chairman

Annette M. Barbaccia
Executive Director

Francis Rapa
Editor

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