



New Jersey Pinelands Commission **PRESS RELEASE**

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Pinelands Commission moving forward with proposed changes to the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan

SOUTHAMPTON – The Pinelands Commission today voted to proceed with a series of proposed amendments to the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP), the rules that govern land use, development and natural resource protection in the state-designated Pinelands Area.

“These amendments will help bolster the Pinelands Commission’s mandate to protect critical Pinelands resources while, in some cases, providing more predictability and flexibility for municipalities and property owners,” Commission Chairperson Betty Wilson said.

The proposed changes to the CMP pertain to municipal reserve provisions for Pinelands Regional Growth Areas, stormwater management, expansion of the Cape May Landfill, local communications facilities, cumulative costs for waivers and lot size variances and the pilot program for alternative design wastewater treatment systems.

Several of the amendments are an outgrowth of the Pinelands Commission’s intensive review of the Comprehensive Management Plan. Concluded in 2003, the 18-month review resulted in numerous strategies and initiatives aimed at addressing matters related to permanent land protection, regional growth and development.

The proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Management Plan are as follows:

✍ **Stormwater management:** The CMP would be amended to integrate the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) new Stormwater Management Rules, which require all municipalities to adopt municipal stormwater management plans and stormwater management ordinances, into the Pinelands program. Although the Pinelands CMP has required that stormwater be recharged since 1980, the amendments would strengthen the standards for stormwater recharge, require better management of runoff from high pollutant loading areas and encourage better and more efficient stormwater basin design.

✍ **Municipal reserves:** The CMP currently allows municipalities to designate municipal reserves in Pinelands-designated Regional Growth Areas (RGA) as a means to phase and plan for growth. The reserve

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areas are downzoned until other appropriately zoned districts that already have access to infrastructure are developed. Proposed amendments to the CMP would encourage more municipalities to use the designation to better control the pace of residential development.

✍ **Expansion of the Cape May Landfill:** Proposed amendments to the CMP would allow landfill operations to occur on an additional 74 acres of the 486-acre property owned by the Cape May County Municipal Utilities Authority (CMCMUA) within the Pinelands Town management area in Upper Township and Woodbine Borough. Landfilling is already authorized on 93 acres of the property. In exchange, the CMCMUA would be required to deed-restrict the remaining portions of its land to protect it from future landfill activities while prohibiting any development on a roughly 90-acre portion of the property. The Pinelands Commission will also receive \$4.6 million, an amount equal to one-half of the host community payments received by Upper Township and Woodbine Borough. These funds will be used to support Pinelands protection initiatives.

✍ **Local communications facilities:** Proposed amendments to the CMP would clarify that an applicant must site a new facility, such as an antenna or a new tower, on an existing structure or a site that would have the least visual impact on important Pinelands resources. A second amendment sets forth a list of sites where new local communications facilities may be located in the Preservation Area District, Forest Area, Special Agricultural Production Area and Rural Development Area. A third amendment would provide the cellular communications industry and the Pinelands Commission with the flexibility to propose or require multiple shorter towers as opposed to a taller structure in order to reduce the overall visual impact of such facilities.

✍ **Cumulative cost of waivers and lot size variances:** Amendments to the CMP would cut in half the number of Pinelands Development Credits (PDCs) required for the development of undersized lots in Pinelands Villages, Pinelands Towns and Regional Growth Areas in cases where a municipal variance and a waiver of strict compliance, or deviation from Pinelands standards, is required. Under current regulations, the development of such lots requires the purchase of one-half of a PDC. The proposed amendment would change the requirement to one-quarter of a PDC, a move that would significantly reduce the costs for the limited number of applicants who require relief from CMP standards and municipal requirements in order to develop their properties.

✍ **Pilot program for alternate design wastewater treatment systems:** The Pinelands Commission implemented a pilot program for alternate design wastewater treatment systems in 2002 to strengthen the protection of high-quality water resources in the Pinelands by reducing pollution from residential septic systems. The advanced wastewater systems are required for new unsewered homes located on lots smaller than 3.2 acres. A proposed CMP amendment would enable developers in the Pinelands Area to install more than 10 alternate design pilot program systems of the same technology on a single parcel, provided that the Commission's Executive Director determines that the use of the additional systems on the parcel would not substantially alter the character of the certified zoning plan of the municipality in which the parcel is located, taking into account existing and planned infrastructure and the role of the parcel in the Pinelands Development Credit program.

Today's vote authorizes Pinelands Commission staff to begin the rule amendment process. A rule proposal is expected to be published this fall in the New Jersey Register, which will be followed by a 60-day public comment period and a public hearing.