



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
news releases

JULY 30 2013

Contact: Lawrence Hajna (609) 984-1795
Lawrence Ragonese (609) 292-2994

**CHRISTIE ADMINISTRATION GETS \$440,000 FROM U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE
SERVICE FOR TURTLE HABITAT PRESERVATION IN SUSSEX COUNTY**

TRENTON— The Department of Environmental Protection has been awarded two federal grants totaling \$440,000 to be earmarked for the purchase of 164 acres of sensitive habitat in Sussex County that will particularly target preservation and protection of the endangered bog turtle population in New Jersey.

The awards from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will partially finance purchases of two separate tracts, both of which will provide connecting greenways for existing turtle populations, and which will benefit other plant and animal species in the region. In addition, the land preservation would add to existing nature watching areas in Sussex County.

“Continued preservation of key open spaces in New Jersey, whether for habitat protection or recreational uses, is a priority of the Christie Administration,” said Commissioner Bob Martin. “It enhances our environment and provides a better quality of life for our state’s residents.”

“Preservation of this type of very specialized, unique habitat not only will protect the federally threatened bog turtle, offering it a brighter future in New Jersey, but will add to preserved lands that will be available for recreational pursuits, such as hiking and bird watching,” added Dave Chanda, Director of the DEP’s Division of Fish and Wildlife.

The purchase of these properties will improve habitat connectivity, as they connect to approximately 350 acres of already permanently preserved property owned by the state.

The federal money, coming from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s endangered species fund, would pay about 40 percent of the estimated \$950,000 cost of the land preservation in Lafayette and Wantage Township, with the state’s Green Acres Program financing the balance.

One \$400,000 federal grant will be used towards acquisition of four tracts, totaling 143.6 acres, of existing bog turtle habitats, while also connecting to land already preserved by the state. A second \$40,000 federal grant will target the purchase of 20 acres of bog turtle habitat within a unique spring-fed wetland complex, in an area that also hosts a rare plant, the spreading globe flower.

The properties also provide landscape-level protection for upland forest and grassland habitats, thus conserving the hydrology and water quality of the wetlands.

The preserved lands will be managed by the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust in cooperation with the DEP’s Endangered and Nongame Species Program. Management of the property will include removal of woody vegetation to establish a more open canopy and ensuring that a proper wetlands area exists for the bog turtle population.