



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
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**CHRISTIE ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES PRESERVATION
OF MORE THAN 5,000 ACRES IN GREAT EGG HARBOR WATERSHED**
Land deal links tens of thousands of acres of preserved Pinelands and coastal habitats

(TRENTON - The Christie Administration announced today that the Department of Environmental Protection in partnership with the New Jersey Pinelands Commission, The Nature Conservancy, and Conservation Resources, Inc., has preserved 5,079 acres of woodlands and wetlands in Atlantic County's Great Egg Harbor River watershed at a cost of \$9.7 million.

The DEP's Green Acres program finalized two related land purchases securing 4,970 acres from Lenape Farms and 109 acres from HBH Associates. The more than 5,000-acre project, one of the largest state preservation effort in years, helps link together more than 56,000 acres of previously existing state wildlife management areas, plus thousands of additional acres of county parkland in an area where the Pine Barrens meets a coastal estuary ecosystem.

"The preservation of this property further enhances the quality of life in our state, providing additional outdoor recreational opportunities for our residents while adding environmental protections for an important natural area in southern New Jersey," DEP Commissioner Bob Martin said during ceremonies at the property. "We commend our partners for working with the state to preserve such a large tract of ecologically important land at the core of tens of thousands of acres of previously preserved lands."

The property flanks U.S. Route 50 in Estell Manor. The bulk of the property, known as Lenape Farms, contains large expanses of forested uplands that merge into coastal marshlands. The preserved property is now part of a state wildlife management area, providing hunting, fishing, hiking and bird watching opportunities for the public. It will also protect headwaters of Steven's Creek, Gibson's Creek and Mill Creek, which are tributaries to Great Egg Harbor River.

The preserved land directly links Atlantic County's Estell Manor Park to three DEP wildlife management areas - the Tuckahoe Wildlife Management Area and Gibson Creek Wildlife Management Area to the south and the Maple Lake Wildlife Management Area to the west. The Great Egg Harbor River Wildlife Management Area and the sprawling Peaslee Wildlife Management are also located nearby.

The newly acquired land is now the Lenape Farms unit of the Tuckahoe Wildlife Management Area. The public can access the property by foot immediately as the DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife develops and implements a management plan, which will include formal trail development.

"This is the largest single New Jersey land deal we have ever been involved in-a huge amount of acreage in a priority conservation area, with important implications for forests, wildlife and water systems," said Barbara Brummer, New Jersey State Director for The Nature Conservancy.

"We are deeply gratified to have been a leader in protecting this watershed for the future."

The tract had been used as a private hunting game preserve since the early 1900s, and was privately managed for forestry and wildlife purposes for many years.

"Lenape Farms has done a wonderful job of enhancing tree quality, encouraging forest regeneration, reducing wildfire hazards and protecting wildlife habitat for almost 100 years," said Terry Caruso, Supervising Program Development Specialist for the DEP's Green Acres program.

The property provides habitat for a number of wildlife species, including the barred owl, northern pine snake, Pine Barrens tree frog, Cooper's hawk, timber rattlesnake, Cope's gray tree frog, bald eagle, red-headed woodpecker, black rail, osprey, black-crowned night heron and diamondback terrapin.

Under terms of the agreement, Lenape Farms was paid \$9.4 million and HBH Associates received \$334,000.

The DEP provided \$6.5 million in Green Acres funding. The Nature Conservancy provided \$3.2 million, which included a \$2.3 million Pinelands Conservation grant from the Pinelands Commission and a \$264,000 grant from Conservation Resources Inc., a nonprofit organization that provides financial and technical services to the conservation community in New Jersey.

"The Lenape Farms acquisition represents the permanent preservation of one of the largest remaining private parcels in the State" said Michael Catania, President of Conservation Resources, Inc. "This tract, which has been wonderfully managed by private stewards for generations, is reminiscent of one of the huge Adirondack "camp" properties that have recently been preserved by public/private partnerships in New York. CRI salutes both the sellers and the partnership of buyers who had the vision and perseverance to save this gem in perpetuity."

"It has been difficult for Lenape Farms to let go of this beautiful and pristine tract of land," said Stew Keener, President of Lenape Farms Inc. "Our organization has enjoyed and carefully maintained the Lenape Farms property for multiple generations.

"Our stewardship and tree farming, which has been inspired and implemented by our forester, Bob Williams, is well documented and is a source of great pride for us," said Keener. "We sincerely hope that this tradition of excellence continues in perpetuity now that the land is in the public domain. We are honored to have played a part in preserving one of the largest tracts in the state's history."

"This is an excellent addition to our efforts to preserve environmentally-sensitive land," said Nancy Wittenberg, Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission. "Including this parcel, the Commission has now paid out a total of \$7.9 million toward the permanent preservation of 6,670 acres of land."

Together with public and private partners, the Green Acres program has directly protected 650,000 acres of open space and provided hundreds of recreational opportunities for a wide range of activities, including natural areas, hiking and fishing areas, city parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, boat ramps, docks, fishing piers and environmental education.

In addition to providing recreation opportunities, Green Acres projects help protect water quality and stimulate economic development by creating jobs, at the same time making cities and towns more attractive places to live and work.

