

The PINELANDER

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Judith Y. Link of Hamilton Township, Atlantic County joins Pinelands Commission as a new gubernatorial appointee

NEW LISBON, N.J. – The New Jersey Pinelands Commission welcomed Judith Y. Link of Hamilton Township, Atlantic County as she attended her first meeting as a new member of the Commission on July 10.

Governor Jon S. Corzine nominated Link to fill one of seven gubernatorial seats on the Commission, and the state Senate approved her nomination on June 25. She took the oath of office during the Commission's regular meeting in July.

"I would like to thank Governor Corzine for appointing me to the Pinelands Commission," Link said. "That would not have happened,

however, without the support of Senator Jim Whelan, to whom I am very grateful. I hope to use the experience I gained from my 9-year tenure on the Hamilton Township Environmental Commission and to bring my master's degree in biology to bear on issues and challenges that face the Pinelands Commission."

Link has owned and operated Young's Skating Center in Mays Landing since 1995, and she has served on the Hamilton Township Environmental Commission since 2000. During her tenure on the



DAG Amy Donlon, pictured left, administered the oath of office to Judith Y. Link, center, as Link's husband, Jim, stood by her side.

Photo/Paul Leakan

Environmental Commission, Link has

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Commission proposes four changes to the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan

NEW LISBON, N.J. – During its April meeting, the state Pinelands Commission advanced four proposed amendments to the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP), the rules that govern land use, development and natural resource protection in the million-acre Pinelands.

The changes pertain to the management of septic systems, wetlands restoration, the maintenance of electric transmission rights-of-way and forestry management practices. "These proposed amendments include specific and carefully-conceived measures that will undergird the special protections afford-

ed to the Pinelands' unique resources," said John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the Commission. "This includes steps to ensure better maintenance of septic systems to control pollutants and avoid degradation to water quality and help reduce public health risks. These changes also provide specific guidance for those interested in restoring wetlands that are vital to the Pinelands' ecology. Lastly, the changes authorize a detailed plan of maintenance practices for 233 miles

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Commission proposes four changes to the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan

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of electric transmission rights-of-way in the Pinelands, and detail forestry practices that can improve forest management while avoiding negative environmental impacts.”

The proposed amendments are as follows:

■ **Septic System Management:** Changes to the CMP would require that all traditional septic systems in active use in the Pinelands be inspected every three years and pumped out when needed. Current regulations require cleaning or pumping of these systems every three years. The proposed rules, however, recognize the fact that some systems – for example, those serving smaller households – may not require pumping as frequently as others and therefore would not require pumping every three years.

Proposed changes to the CMP also would require all Pinelands municipalities to adopt amendments to their land-use ordinances to establish programs for the long-term maintenance of septic systems. This will include the issuance of operating permits to ensure that septic systems are being properly maintained.

This will enable Pinelands municipalities to comply with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s new rules that require septic system management. To help Pinelands municipalities carry out this responsibility, the Commission will prepare and distribute a model ordinance that will implement the newly proposed changes to the CMP and can be used to design these maintenance

programs.

■ **Wetlands restoration:** Wetlands are vital to the Pinelands’ ecological character because they provide critical habitat for many rare plant and animal species and they maintain ground and surface water quality and critical stormwater storage capacity that helps control flooding. Development is generally prohibited within all wetlands in the Pinelands, and activities that have an irreversible effect on wetlands’ ecological integrity are strictly prohibited. However, these limitations pose a dilemma when the Commission receives proposals to restore natural wetland vegetation communities that have been impacted or altered due to human activities such as agriculture or urban development. These restoration projects might be viewed as inconsistent with Pinelands rules despite the beneficial effects they might provide to these wetlands.

Proposed changes to the CMP seek to solve this dilemma by authorizing certain management activities in wetlands. For example, this will allow the establishment of characteristic wetlands on inactive farmland, the removal of exotic plant species or Phragmites from a wetland and activities that achieve ecological goals such as preventing the loss of a rare wetland community through succession, expanding a rare type of wetland community or creating more favorable conditions for the viability of rare plant or animal populations.

■ **Maintenance of electric transmission rights-of-way:** Changes to the CMP would establish a pilot program

that authorizes a plan to maintain electric transmission rights-of-way in the Pinelands. The plan calls for a variety of vegetation management practices for each of the roughly 3,000 spans along approximately 233 miles of right-of-way. The primary objectives of the plan are to create and maintain early successional (low-growth) habitats that are characteristic of the Pinelands, provide habitat for native and rare plant and animal species and ensure the reliability and safety of the electric transmission system in the Pinelands.

The CMP would be amended to allow utility companies to carry out these prescriptions without prior approval by the Commission for 10 years. This period will allow for the Commission’s Science office to undertake an extensive monitoring program to evaluate the effectiveness of the prescriptions and to determine whether the goals are being met. The utility companies would be required to remit annual payments to the Commission to help finance these monitoring responsibilities. At the end of the 10-year period, the Commission’s Executive Director would recommend whether to permanently incorporate the plan into the CMP, extend the pilot program or propose other measures.

■ **Forestry:** The Pinelands plan acknowledges that proper management of Pinelands forests will increase their economic value to their owners while also preserving and sustaining the overall ecological

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analyzed and investigated development applications that were presented to the township's Planning Board to determine their environmental and ecological impacts.

She holds a bachelor's of science degree in biology from Ursinus College and a master's of science in biology (entomology) from West Chester University. She taught biology at Wissahickon High School in Ambler, Pa., for 12 years. "As a homeowner and business person within the Pinelands, I hope to bring a well-balanced perspective to the Commission, and I look forward to working with all the Commission members, the Executive Director and staff," Link said.

"Judith Link brings a strong back-

ground in biology to the Commission, and we look forward to working with her and other Commission members as we continue to carry out a comprehensive plan that has successfully protect-

ed a million-acre region for three decades," said John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the Commission.

The Pinelands Commission consists of 15 members: seven appointed by the Governor of New Jersey, one appointed by each of the seven Pinelands counties and one appointed by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. Members of the Commission serve staggered, three-year terms and do not receive compensation for their service. In addition to nominating Link, Governor Corzine nominated the Rev. Guy Campbell of Moorestown, Burlington County,

Stephen V. Lee III of Chatsworth, Burlington County and Edward Lloyd of South Orange, Essex County for re-appointment as gubernatorial appointees on the Commission. The Governor also nominated Lawrence J. Niles of Bordentown, Burlington County to serve as a new gubernatorial appointee on the Commission.

The state Senate will consider approving the appointments of Campbell, Lee, Lloyd and Niles when it reconvenes in November. In the meantime, those gubernatorial appointees who were nominated for re-appointment -- Commissioners Campbell (a member since 2002), Lee (a member since 1982) and Lloyd (a member since 2002) -- will continue to serve on the Commission as "hold-over" members.



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character of the Pinelands. In 2004, the Commission asked its Forestry Advisory Committee to review, clarify and refine the forestry provision in the CMP. More specifically, the Committee was asked to recommend management practices designed to ensure that forestry activities in the Pinelands are consistent with the Commission's mandate to protect and maintain the region's unique environ-

ment while ensuring that forestry remains a viable economic and cultural resource. In 2006, the Committee issued a report that suggests methods to improve forest management planning on private and state-owned properties and recommends a series of silvicultural practices for forestry in the Pinelands. These recommendations guided the proposed amendments to the CMP. The proposed changes provide more direct and specific guidance to potential applicants regarding

the practices that can be employed to better manage Pinelands forests.

The four proposed rule amendments were published in the New Jersey Register and public hearings were held in July.

Written comments can be submitted to the Commission via regular mail, fax or e-mail until August 14, 2009.

For more information, log onto www.nj.gov/pinelands.





20th annual Pinelands Short Course attracts record crowd of nearly 700 attendees

Educational event continues to grow in popularity

The 20th annual Pinelands Short Course rewrote the record books as attendance soared to a record high of 693 people.

Held on March 7 at Burlington County College's Pemberton Township campus, the event offered a total of 34 educational presentations, including 24 new programs and the first-ever, all-day bus tour of the Pinelands.

"We're tremendously pleased to see attendance at the Short Course rise to record levels during each of the past four years," said John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission. "Clearly, the public has a strong interest in learning more about the Pinelands, and we're hopeful that even more people will come to discover why it is so vital to protect this special place."

The Pinelands Short Course is sponsored by the Commission, the Pinelands Institute for Natural and

Environmental Studies and Burlington County College (BCC). The event has been held at BCC for the past six years.

This year's Short Course featured three live musical performances and three field trips.

Fifty people attended the all-day bus tour. The guided tour took participants to cedar swamps at the Brendan T. Byrne State Forest, as well as other natural gems such as the Franklin Parker Preserve, the Pine Plains and the historic Batsto Village. Other new courses included a new documentary film about Emilio Carranza, a famous Mexican aviator whose plane crashed in the Pinelands in 1928, as well as courses about the



George Young, pictured right, brought in several species of live snakes during his popular presentation at the 20th annual Pinelands Short Course. Photo/Paul Leakan

region's botanical treasures, ghost towns, archaeology, ethnic settlements, the history of Double Trouble State Park, tundra swans, vultures and other birds, fungi, a review of the Pinelands' ecological integrity, the lifestyles and culture of native Pinelands residents, the plight of honey bees in the Pinelands and elsewhere, beneficial uses of native plants, how to create a

dragonfly/wildlife pond and attract butterflies, a discussion of author John McPhee and a half-day field trip to Whitesbog Village to tour "Holly Haven."

Two other new courses were geared specifically for teachers, with one focusing on recently published educational resource materials pertaining to Wharton State Forest and another focusing on a new Pinelands-themed, interactive DVD that can be used to raise awareness and appreciation of the Pinelands.

The Pinelands Short Course is registered with the New Jersey Department of Education, and professional development credits are provided to New Jersey teachers who attend.



Pinelands Short Course participants point toward a nesting bald eagle that they saw during an all-day bus tour of the region. Photo/Ed Wengrowski





700-acre property in the Pinelands in Atlantic County permanently preserved with money administered by the Pinelands Commission

NEW LISBON, N.J. – An environmentally-sensitive, 700-acre property in the Pinelands in Hamilton Township, Atlantic County has been permanently preserved with funds administered by the Pinelands Commission.

The Commission has transferred \$300,000 from the Pinelands Conservation Fund to Atlantic County, which is using the money toward its recent purchase of the Cologne Avenue property. The acquisition was a cooperative effort among the Commission, Atlantic County and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres Program.

The land is located less than one mile from the Hamilton Mall and the Cape Atlantic Community College, and it might have been subject to the development of 40 to 60 single-family homes. It is also located adjacent to New Jersey Natural Lands Trust's Mankiller Preserve and the Makepeace Lake Wildlife Management Area.

"This outstanding property contains an expansive block of Pinelands forest with critical habitat for rare and indigenous wildlife and a substantial amount of uplands that also made it vulnerable to development," said John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission. "This land is located next to several state-owned properties that already have been preserved, as well as a rapidly growing area. The Commission is thrilled to be in a position to help permanently preserve this property and its tremendous natural resources. By doing so, we can greatly bolster the protection of surrounding forested land and the Pinelands ecosystem as a whole."

The property is located in a Pinelands-designated Rural Development Area

and contains a significant amount of uplands, as well as a stream that passes through the center of the parcel and creates critical habitat for various species of Pinelands plants and animals. The previous landowners had provided the Pinelands Commission with a conceptual development plan that shows 69 lots. The property is home to vernal ponds, which are areas where water collects in the winter and spring but dry up during the summer, preventing the establishment of fish that would normally prey upon amphibians. These areas are important because they provide breeding habitat for certain rare Pinelands species such as the Pine Barrens treefrog and Eastern tiger salamander.

Thus far, the Pinelands Commission has granted \$619,333 from the Pinelands Conservation Fund toward the permanent preservation of approximately 900 acres in the Pinelands. This includes the preservation of a 70-acre parcel in Buena Vista, Atlantic County, a 20-acre property in Galloway, Atlantic County, a 63-acre property in Mullica, Atlantic County, a 10-acre property in Medford, Burlington County and a 30-acre property on the border of Buena Borough, Atlantic County and Franklin Township, Gloucester County. The fair market value of these properties is \$3.3 million.

The Commission has allocated an additional \$4,829,000 from the Pinelands Conservation Fund to pre-



The 700-acre property in Hamilton features vernal ponds such as the one above. Vernal ponds provide breeding habitat for rare Pinelands species such as the Pine Barrens treefrog. Photo/Paul Leakan

serve 2,221 more acres in the Pinelands, with a fair market value of \$18,105,000.

The Pinelands Conservation Fund was created in 2004 as part of an agreement with the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities to permit the construction and upgrade of an electric transmission line through eastern portions of the Pinelands.

Under the agreement, the special fund was established to further the Pinelands protection program and ensure a greater level of protection of the unique resources of the Pinelands Area. The utility that built the transmission lines, Atlantic City Electric (formerly Conectiv), provided \$13 million to establish the Fund.



Thirty years after passage of the Pinelands Protection Act, the Commission remains focused on its mission

By John C. Stokes

Three decades have passed since then-New Jersey Gov. Brendan T. Byrne accomplished what many thought impossible.

"In the midst of what many optimists considered a bleak situation, we have pulled through with legislation which will provide for a comprehensive planning and management system for the Pinelands," Byrne said before signing the Pinelands Protection Act on June 28, 1979. "This legislation ... is testimony to our civilization and future generations that amid rapid progress we have enough foresight to protect beauty."

Byrne was keenly aware of the serious threats facing the Pinelands and the pressing need to protect a million-acre region that stretches across parts of Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Ocean counties.

Residents can take pride in know-

ing that the Pinelands' vast mosaic of rivers, streams, forests, farms and towns are being protected through comprehensive, regional planning as Byrne envisioned 30 years ago.

The Pinelands Commission, the state agency that oversees land-use, development and natural resource protection in the Pinelands, remains committed to achieving its mission to preserve, protect and enhance this special part of New Jersey.

During the past year alone, the Commission:

- Awarded grants that have permanently preserved a total of approximately 900 acres of land in the Pinelands in Atlantic, Burlington and Ocean counties. An additional 2,221 acres of land in the Pinelands are in the process of being preserved through these funds;

- Completed a scientific study that evaluates the status of the Pinelands' ecology by analyzing landscape and watershed conditions throughout the region.

The Commission is using information from this study, among other data, to identify ways to ensure that important natural areas receive the appropriate protection;

Continued to lead a 6-year study of the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer, a 17-trillion-gallon aquifer that supplies drinking water to more than 1 million people in South Jersey.

The study will determine how current and future water supply needs within the Pinelands may be met;

- Helped Barnegat and Stafford township officials to develop and begin implementing a series of strategies aimed at mitigating wild-fire risks in the two communities. The project will serve as a model for other communities throughout the Pinelands;

- Approved a measure that requires the clustering of residential development in Pinelands-designated Forest Areas and Rural Development Areas. Clustering is a style of development that allows reduced lot sizes in exchange for the permanent preservation of open space or other desirable features of a property. Development is clustered on a small portion of a property, such as areas close to roads and other infrastructure, while the open space that constitutes the larger remainder of the property is permanently protected through deed restriction. By clustering development in the Forest and Rural Development Areas, the Commission can better protect large, contiguous areas of land that contain sensitive, high-quality water supplies and provide important habitat for rare Pinelands plants and animals. Clustering also helps towns reduce the costs, such as those associated with road maintenance and school busing, of serving homes that otherwise would be built on large, scattered lots;



Dense vegetation is reflected on the tea-colored Toms River in the Pinelands in Ocean County.

Photo/Paul Leakan

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Second annual Pinelands-Friendly Yard & Garden Fair to feature native Pinelands plant sale, live animals and educational presentations

The Pinelands-Friendly Yard & Garden Fair will once again offer the public a key opportunity to learn about the benefits of native plants, and how certain measures taken in their own yards can help protect the Pinelands' unique environment.

The second-annual event will be held on Saturday, September 12 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge on 4 Sawmill Road in Medford Township, Burlington County, NJ.

The fair is being co-sponsored by the Pinelands Commission, the Pinelands Preservation Alliance and Cedar Run, and is part of a backyard habitat education program that promotes the benefits of using native Pinelands plants to

help preserve and protect the region's unique environment.

The fair will feature an educational presentation by Mike McGrath, host of the nationally-syndicated public radio show, "You Bet Your Garden."

Four nurseries will offer an extensive selection of native Pinelands plants for sale during the event.

The fair also will feature a presentation on plants

used by Native Americans, a demonstration about Pinelands water quality, plant and landscape design experts, a booth showing how to make compost, a booth discussing native pollinators and beneficial insects in the Pinelands, a rain



Last year's Pinelands-Friendly Yard & Garden Fair attracted approximately 400 people.

Photo/Paul Leakan

barrel and rain garden display, live animal demonstrations and a guided nature walk.

Admission to the event is free.

For more information, please log onto www.nj.gov/pinelands.



Thirty years after passage of the Pinelands Protection Act, the Commission remains focused on its mission

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■ Proposed amendments to the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan that will improve the management of septic systems, wetlands restoration, the maintenance of electric transmission rights-of-way and forestry management practices;

■ Worked with 16 Pinelands municipalities and five counties to continue developing the Pine Barrens Byway, a 130-mile driving trail that seeks to boost eco-tourism opportunities in the southern portion of the Pinelands;

■ Tracked key economic indicators

to monitor the economic condition of Pinelands communities. According to the latest study, the Pinelands' unemployment rate is lower than the state and national averages while the average property tax bill in the Pinelands is also lower than other areas of South Jersey and the state as a whole; and

■ Educated nearly 4,000 people about the Pinelands' natural, cultural and historic resources. This includes record attendance at the annual Pinelands Short Course, as well as a Pinelands-themed World Water Monitoring Day, Pinelands-Friendly Yard and Garden Fair, presentations at our office, festivals

and in-class programs delivered at public schools.

I'm proud of these accomplishments because they demonstrate an ongoing dedication to carry forth Byrne's message to "protect beauty" for future generations. And while many challenges lie ahead, the Pinelands Commission and our residents will remain focused on achieving a mission that was boldly launched three decades ago.

Stokes is the Executive Director of the New Jersey Pinelands Commission



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Pinelands Commission launches effort to develop improved management practices aimed at better protecting native roadside plants in the Pinelands

Native plants that tend to grow along roadways convey the unique ecological character of the Pinelands and offer an important contribution to the area's identity.

To promote an ecological approach to roadside maintenance that will result in the protection and perpetuation of native roadside plants, the Pinelands Commission has initiated an effort to develop improved management practices.

The first step in this effort is to identify known rare plant "hotspots" along Pinelands roadsides. To accomplish this objective the Commission has invited a group of botanists with extensive knowledge of Pinelands ecology and expertise working with rare

Pinelands plants to help map these plant locations. As part of this effort, the Commission will work with the Pinelands Preservation Alliance to develop roadside maintenance practices.

Once the mapping work is concluded and recommended management practices have been drafted, the Commission will meet with the road maintenance/public works supervisors from all seven counties within the Pinelands and representatives of state transportation departments responsible for operating the Garden State Parkway and Atlantic City Expressway to present the management practices, describe the benefits of using these practices



The Pine Barrens gentian is a rare plant species that can be found growing along some roadsides in the Pinelands.

Photo/Donna McBride

and encourage these agencies to implement them. In time, the program will be expanded and the Commission will conduct discussions with appropriate representatives of municipalities throughout the Pinelands.