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CHRISTIE ADMINISTRATION REMEMBERS THE LIFE OF RICHARD J. SULLIVAN, FIRST DEP COMMISSIONER AND LONGTIME PINELANDS COMMISSION CHAIRMAN

TRENTON – The Christie Administration and New Jersey’s environmental community today are remembering the life and achievements of Richard J. Sullivan, the first Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and former longtime chairman of the New Jersey Pinelands Commission.

Sullivan, recognized as one of the state’s pioneers in environmental protection through his dedication to public service, died today with his family by his side. He was 86.

“Richard Sullivan was one of New Jersey’s leading advocates for environmental protection, his career in public service coinciding with the birth and growth of the environmental movement,” said Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Bob Martin. “He truly embodied what is good and noble about public service, and leaves a legacy that is still evident here at the DEP and across the state in the places from north to south that have been protected as a result of his love for the environment.”

Governor William T. Cahill appointed Mr. Sullivan to serve as the first DEP Commissioner in 1970. He served until 1974.

The DEP was created on America’s first official Earth Day – April 22, 1970. Mr. Sullivan guided the DEP as New Jersey became the third state to consolidate all of its environmental programs under one agency. Today, the DEP is recognized as a national leader in pollution prevention, open space preservation and innovative environmental strategies.

“Richard is still the model for environmentalism. His personality, his intellect, and his way of doing business were perfect for that moment in time,” said Candace Ashmun, a long-time friend and who has served on the Pinelands Commission for three decades. “He created an agency that could deal with a lot of big problems, and still had a heart. The state is infinitely better because of Richard. We are never going to forget him.”

“Richard represented the epitome of what every public servant should strive to be – a man of immense integrity, with a sense of fairness, and a focused commitment on devising and implementing the best public policies for New Jersey’s natural and cultural resources,” said Terrence D. Moore, the Pinelands Commission’s first Executive Director, serving from 1979 to 1999. “Everyone who has ever worked with Richard counts it as a privilege and among the most rewarding times in their lives. He was not only a fine public administrator, but a true gentleman in every circumstance.”

During his tenure as DEP Commissioner, Mr. Sullivan earned a reputation as a tireless advocate for preservation of parks and open space. His work helped establish Liberty State Park, today the most visited state park in New Jersey. A 36-acre natural area at Liberty, known as the Richard J. Sullivan Natural Area, that protects tidal wetlands in the Hudson River Estuary was dedicated in Mr. Sullivan’s honor in 2005.

Mr. Sullivan also is regarded as one of the architects of the Pinelands Commission, created in the late 1970s to protect this million-acre ecologically unique region that spans most of South Jersey.

Then-Governor Thomas H. Kean appointed Mr. Sullivan to serve as the Commission’s second chairman in 1988, a position he held for 10 year. As chairman, Mr. Sullivan was regarded as being instrumental in maintaining the environmental standards set for the Pinelands while making the agency more accessible.

The Richard J. Sullivan Center for Environmental Policy & Education located at the Commission’s headquarters in New Lisbon, Burlington County, is named in his honor.

“Richard Sullivan was a trusted advisor and friend to his successors, as well as a mentor and a role model for many environmental leaders,” said Michael Catania, a longtime land-preservation advocate and former DEP Deputy Commissioner. “Richard’s incredibly broad expertise, his humility and willingness to be a resource for others, and his ability to treat everyone with the utmost respect have all contributed to the civility of our discourse, and ultimately to the wisdom of our environmental policies.”