

For Immediate Release:

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Environmental Advocates Challenge DEP Permit Allowing Development Of Pinelands Reserve in Jackson Township

Trenton, NJ – The Pinelands Preservation Alliance and American Littoral Society have filed an appeal challenging the Treatment Works Approval (TWA) issued by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to the Jackson Township Municipal Utilities Authority authorizing the extension of sewers for the proposed Jackson Valley development. The groups are represented by the Eastern Environmental Law Center (EELC), New Jersey’s only non-profit environmental law firm. The appeal objects to the issuing of the TWA on the grounds that it violates New Jersey’s Water Quality Management Planning regulations and Surface Water Quality Standards, as well as the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 and the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan.

Attorney Richard Webster of the EELC stated “The proposed Jackson Valley development would destroy a large area of Pine Barrens forest that is within the Pinelands National Reserve, forms the headwaters of the Toms River, and drains to Barnegat Bay. In recognition of the river’s environmental and recreational importance, Toms River has been designated as a Category One waterway, which is the highest water quality category under the state’s Water Quality Planning Act.” This forest is also adjacent to the Colliers Mills Wildlife Management Area and is habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife species.

“Barnegat Bay is under severe assault from polluted runoff flowing from the uncontrolled development that has taken place across most of its watershed. Shellfish populations are crashing, stinging jellyfish are increasing and the public’s ability to use and enjoy Barnegat Bay is being seriously harmed. The people of Ocean County and the state as a whole expect government to do its utmost and apply the law to protect the land that protects the Bay. In this case, DEP failed to do so,” said Tim Dillingham, executive director of the American Littoral Society (ALS).

“Developing this land would represent the worst kind of scattered, leapfrog sprawl. We are deeply disappointed that the Department of Environmental Protection chose to ignore its own regulations and the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan by granting the Treatment Works Approval,” remarked Carleton Montgomery, executive director of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance (PPA).

“As goes sewer expansion, so goes sprawling development and loss of forests and farms,” observed Dillingham. DEP granted the permit even though Ocean County is currently working on a new Wastewater Management Plan. “By granting the TWA for Jackson Valley, DEP has jeopardized Ocean County’s ability to do its job in planning for the future, since DEP has authorized a large area to be lost to development before the new plan is even presented for public review,” Dillingham concluded.

“Thirty years ago, the state of New Jersey committed to protect the Pinelands National Reserve through comprehensive regional land use planning. The Pinelands Plan does that and rightly designates this area for a very high level of protection. DEP’s sewer permit directly violates that commitment to the Pinelands and undermines the integrity of the Pinelands system,” Montgomery stated.

The Pinelands Preservation Alliance is a nonprofit advocacy and education group founded in 1989 to promote the protection of the Pinelands’ natural and historic resources. PPA is headquartered in Southampton, New Jersey, and can be reached at (609) 859-8860 or ppa@pinelandsalliance.org. Its web site is www.pinelandsalliance.org.

The American Littoral Society is a national, membership based coastal conservation organization headquartered in Highlands, New Jersey. The Society can be reached at 732-291-0055. Its website is www.littoralsociety.org.

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