




ALL OF THE PINELANDS' RARE PLANTS SHOULD BE PROTECTED

Some of the strongest protections in New Jersey for rare, threatened, and endangered species are embodied in the New Jersey Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP). Even so, many of this region's imperiled plant species are NOT officially protected by the regulations. In order to understand how this happened and what we can do about it, we need to review the history.

even extirpated, the Pinelands Commission inappropriately excluded all seventeen of them from the list it formally adopted.

In 1981, The Conservation and Environmental Studies Center, supported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, published a document written by David B. Snyder and V. Eugene Vivian, titled *Rare and Endangered Vascular Plant Species in New Jersey*. The authors had conducted a thorough literature search and reviewed pertinent specimens at the Chrysler Herbarium at Rutgers University and at the herbarium of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. In collaboration with twelve other experts, they had conducted extensive field research to collect data and develop this final report.

The Snyder and Vivian report documents over 180 plants of conservation concern within the broader Pinelands region (including peripheral areas, the coastal zone, and Cape May County). About fifty-seven of those species were historically documented within the general



Officially unprotected:
Arethusa bulbosa
Dragon's-mouth
State Rank: S2.

The habitat is mossy, open, pineland bogs and swampy grasslands.

Illustration courtesy www.efloras.org.

The CMP currently protects all state-listed endangered plant species and a number of species identified by name, which the regulation says "are hereby found and declared to be threatened or endangered plants of the Pinelands." What follows is a list of fifty-four species that was included in the CMP at its adoption in 1981, based on a report furnished in 1980. Actually, the authors of that report, Nicholas Caiazza and David E. Fairbrothers, indicated a need to protect seventy-one species. There being no official state status for plants at that time, the authors, on the basis of their research and professional judgment, considered twenty species to be "endangered," thirty-four "threatened," and seventeen "undetermined."

The Caiazza and Fairbrothers report (as well as the version of that report that had been previously published in R. Forman (ed.), *Pine Barrens: Ecosystem and Landscape*, 1979) indicated that, in addition to the plant species that were designated as "endangered" and "threatened," the plants designated "undetermined" were also considered imperiled. It was only the degree of imperilment that was undetermined. On the basis of this uncertainty about whether they were threatened, endangered, or possibly

Officially unprotected:
***Asclepias variegata*, White Milkweed**
State Rank: S2



The habitat is dry, open, sandy or gravelly ground.

Richard A. Howard Photograph Collection, courtesy of Smithsonian Institution

area now designated as the Pinelands Protection Area. Eleven of them were characteristic Pine Barrens plants that had been designated "undetermined" by Caiazza and Fairbrothers in the afore-mentioned report, and were, as

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yet, unprotected under the CMP.

In 1984, the New Jersey Natural Heritage Program was established. The mission of the Heritage Program is primarily to identify conservation priorities for the state and develop programs to monitor and conserve valuable natural resources. It uses an internationally recognized and widely accepted methodology developed, initially, by The Nature Conservancy.

Beginning in 1984, the Heritage Program staff made recommendations to the Pinelands Commission staff that the CMP plant list should be expanded. This recommendation was based largely upon the data that Snyder, Vivian, and their collaborators had gathered over the previous five years.

The Heritage Program staff continued to investigate the state's flora as to the abundance, distribution, and condition of the populations of each known taxon, and it confirmed that many more imperiled species were known from the Pinelands region than were under the protection of the CMP.

The Heritage Program staff continued to recommend to the Pinelands Commission that the CMP list of protected plants should be expanded in accordance with the most up-to-date information, but the Commission did not make any changes.



Officially unprotected:
Andropogon gyrans
Elliott's Bluestem
State Rank: S2

The habitat is dry, open, sterile soil.

Illustration courtesy Utah State Univ. Grass Manual (on-line version)


In 1989, the state enacted the Endangered Plant Species List Act, which authorized the NJ DEP to create and maintain a list of endangered plant species. Nearly half the species that had been designated as "undetermined" by Caiazza and Fairbrothers in the 1980 report now became officially listed as endangered in the state. The Heritage Program staff continued to recommend to the Commission staff that the CMP should be revised to include all plants in need of protection, but the Commission did not make any revisions.

In 2003, Pinelands Preservation Alliance (PPA) began

a sustained effort to encourage the Pinelands Commission to revise its protected plant list. PPA's advocacy was stimulated and guided by the testimony of a broad informal coalition of local conservationists, biologists, and ecologists, including personnel with the NJ DEP's Office of Natural Lands Management and the local office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In 2005, the Commission amended the CMP to include the state list of endangered plants. This was a positive move, in that it broadened the scope of plant protection. However, it fell short of accomplishing what the state's experts had recommended, i.e., that, in addition to the state-listed endangered plants, all the plants deserving "threatened" status should be protected as well.

Officially unprotected:
***Houstonia longifolia*, Long-leaf Summer Bluet**
State Rank: SH



The habitat is dry, rocky or gravelly soil.

Illustration courtesy Dan Tenaglia, Atlas of Florida Vascular Plants

Although New Jersey does not have an official "threatened" status for plants, it effectively recognizes plant species at this level of conservation concern through its official list of Plant Species of Concern maintained by the Heritage Program. As defined in the Endangered Plant Species Program rules, Plant Species of Concern serves as the official "working list for transition of species to and from the Endangered Plant Species List," and thus this designation coincides with the federal standard for "threatened" species on which the CMP's use of the term is based.

Most of the Plant Species of Concern in the Pinelands are ranked S1 (critically imperiled), S2 (imperiled), or S3 (rare and may soon become imperiled if current trends continue). A smaller number are designated SX (determined or presumed to be extirpated) or SH (historically present but no extant occurrences known). Both concep-

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Officially unprotected:
Panicum oligosanthos, Few-fruited Panic-grass
State Rank: S1



The habitat is dry, sandy soil.

Illustration courtesy Utah State Univ. Grass Manual (on-line version)

tually and in practical application of conservation measures, "Plant Species of Concern" is synonymous with "threatened plant species."

PPA, local plant experts, and other conservation organizations have continued to recommend to the Pinelands Commission what the Heritage Program has been recommending to the Commission staff since 1985: that the CMP should expressly protect all of the Endangered Plant Species and Plant Species of Concern known to occur in the region. So far, the Pinelands Commission has taken no action. PPA has now submitted a new written request with extensive justification and documentation asking the Commission to protect all Plant Species of Concern.

What to do? We need everyone in the state that cares about plant conservation to write to the Commission and create a record of emphatic public support. You might say it just this simply:

(date)

Mr. John Stokes, Executive Director
Pinelands Commission
PO Box 7
15 Springfield Road
New Lisbon, New Jersey 08064

Dear Mr. Stokes,

I support a revision of the Comprehensive Management Plan, so that all of the Endangered Plant Species and Plant Species of Concern, as listed by the New Jersey Natural Heritage Program, will get official protection in the Pinelands.

Sincerely,

(Your signature)



2008 Pinelands Commission Meeting Schedule

January 11, 2008
February 8, 2008
March 14, 2008
April 11, 2008
May 9, 2008
June 13, 2008

July 11, 2008
August 8, 2008
September 12, 2008
October 10, 2008
November 14, 2008
December 12, 2008

Pinelands Commission meetings are open to the public. Agendas are posted one week prior to the meeting at <http://www.state.nj.us/pinelands>



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- Chairman's Circle \$1,000
- Other _____

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 A Patron will receive a copy of *Exploring the Pine Barrens of New Jersey* book
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