



PINELANDS
PRESERVATION
ALLIANCE

For Immediate Release:

September 14, 2017

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The Pinelands Commission Passes Resolution to Protect the Pinelands from Off-Road Vehicle Damage

For the first time in its history, the Pinelands Commission passed a resolution that will greatly reduce damages caused by off-road vehicles in the heart of the Pinelands National Reserve within Wharton State Forest. The resolution designates only those sand roads marked on specific USGS topographical maps being available for use by street-legal motorized vehicles.

This map of Wharton will be made available to the public and will present a great public access benefit to those who are seeking a reliable and responsible way to explore its 122,800 acres of preserved open space. Because of the vast area and limited funding for law enforcement, Wharton has become known throughout the Northeast United States as an area where off-road vehicle users could challenge their machines against the land with little or no repercussions. The passage of this resolution makes it clear that the Pinelands National Reserve was not designated to be an off-road vehicle park, but a place where proper management can allow people to co-exist along with a thriving local environment.

State Park Police have worked tirelessly to try and control the deluge of ORV activity, and this resolution aims to fix a key gap in the overall enforcement strategy, which is to designate what sand roads or trails are open to motor traffic. This will allow State Forest officials to create barriers to vehicles in sensitive areas, and it will allow Park Police to issue citations with the confidence that a judge will not be fooled by an excuse of ignorance when the violator goes to court.

"The Pinelands Commission resolution is another tool to both educate law-abiding citizens and to crack down on irresponsible drivers traveling through the largest state forest in New Jersey. There is no doubt that law enforcement will need to continue their efforts to identify individuals and issue citations and that volunteers and organizations must continue restoration, protection, and education efforts. Pinelands Preservation Alliance thanks the Pinelands Commissioners that have worked hard to get this resolution passed. The Commission

efforts bring us a step closer to reducing unnecessary off-road vehicle damage," says Jaclyn Rhoads, assistant executive director of Pinelands Preservation Alliance.

"Although many areas of the Pinelands have been damaged by off-road vehicles, we have proven through our volunteer activities that areas protected from further disturbance will begin to recover when given time. We are now at the forefront of addressing an issue that has had severe effects on preserved land nationwide and this resolution is just the beginning to a solution for this widespread issue," states Jason Howell, stewardship coordinator, Pinelands Preservation Alliance.

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The Pinelands Preservation Alliance (PPA) was established as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization in 1989 by environmental leaders and Pinelands residents, with the goal of preserving and protecting the more than 1 million acres of the New Jersey Pinelands. PPA remains the only private organization dedicated solely to environmental protection throughout the Pinelands.

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