

13 March, 2009

Public Comment, Pinelands Commission Meeting

Bob Moyer, 2424 Phillips Road, Bamber NJ----Thanks for the opportunity to speak to you this morning.

My hobby and my passion is the vegetation of the Pine Barrens. I have seen a lot of destruction done to native vegetation by municipal and county road departments as I enjoy my hobby.

I have read the streamlining MOA and I have concerns that implementing this document will not help the situation, and in fact may worsen protection.

I'm not here to attack the MOA line by line. I'll leave that to others. But I do want to set the stage for what we could lose if we don't ensure the protections and safeguards are in place.

Spring, Summer, and Fall are coming. To people who love the Pine Barrens, it means another exciting year ahead.

It's always nice to travel the roads in the Pine Barrens, with their clean, white sand, and the vegetation we've grown familiar with. It is a relaxing way to escape the billboards and strip malls we all grow tired of in the rest of New Jersey.

For many of us, in fact for more citizens than you would believe, and from all walks of life, it's in our blood to get out and enjoy these roads. It's a ritual.

Maybe some of you have the same passion. You might even recognize these places I'm going to mention.

This time of year, it's possible to find Broom Crowberry coming into bloom, right on the shoulder of the north side of route 72, east of Coyle Field.

After that, in April, I often stop along route 539 to see trailing arbutus, with its fragrant pink flowers.....and along Dover Road East of Bamber, I can see pxyie moss, with creamy white flowers.....and on Dover Road West of Bamber, it's the time to visit Bearberry, just coming into bloom with the delicate pink/white flowers.

Sand Myrtle and Staggerbush are easily found along Carranza Road in May, if you want to visit them. They are sure signs that we are well into spring.

In late May, route 70 just West of Lakehurst has beautiful blooms of Pine Barren Heather and the multicolored leaves of Ipecac,.....and along Lacey Road East of Bamber, it's not hard to find the intense colors of bird-foot violet and pine barren frostweed.

One particularly beautiful patch of blue-eyed grass can always be found East of Whiting along route 530 in late May, and hundreds of Blue-toadflax flowers give many of our roadsides a beautiful blue sheen throughout the month of May, and often into June.

In June, some of the roads close to the Mullica and Wading River are proud to show off the large blue flag violets, and even the big yellow flowers of prickly pear are a welcome site on several roads in Burlington and Ocean County.

Now July—that's the time for Orchid hunting! Not for collecting, for photography. Who among you has not seen the white fringed orchids on route 563 and Lower Bank Road, or the crested yellow orchid along a road found in Burlington County in late July that I won't even name in public. They are gorgeous!

Imagine losing that to a careless roadside fill job? It has happened. I am always searching for Yellow fringed orchid, but guess what...it has been annihilated by human roadside disturbance everywhere.

And what about Pickering's Morning Glory? We all know 2 locations where it is just 10 feet from the road edge in July...and Turks Cap lily, one of the most beautiful flowers I have ever seen, is easily found along Magnolia Road in Pemberton in late July.

We cannot forget the roadside canals and swales that bloom with yellow bladderwort and pond lily. They can be found along many roads south of Chatsworth in July.

Even more orchids, the little white Ladies tresses can be found along some of the roads in late August, particularly down by Jenkins Neck. Alongside them can be found Yellow Saint Johnswort, Orange Grass, pink meadow beauty, orange butterfly weed, and even Bluecurls.

Lately, I have seen golden aster, both Maryland AND Sickle leaved along Dover Road in Bamber. That's a good thing, because the Sickle leaved Golden Aster in Lakehurst by the Golden triangle is being squeezed out and crushed by development. We have to keep the rest of it safe.

In late August things really get going along the roadsides in the pines. Who among you has ever seen the beautiful wand-like goldenrod along route 206 in Atsion? Or how about the roadside show created by the many varieties of Blue Aster up and down the roadway in Whiting..and Chatsworth...and Tabernacle? Even more beautiful is the bright golden flowers of the tickseed sunflower in many of the small ditches.

But in September, when nature has just about exhausted herself with beauty, and the last of the tiny white jointweed flowers are dying off, she gives us a final treat or two. She saves the best for last, like desert. Of course I'm talking about the Blue Gentian and Blazing Star.

Many of these locations have been threatened in one way or another. I can provide some historical perspective. Just about 8 years ago, it was me who delivered bags of roadside trash to member of the DEP, Pinelands Commission, and County Officials to make a point. I picked the trash out of roadside fill that Ocean County was dumping on roadsides in the preservation district.

I expected action, but it did little good, all I got were promises. The practice continued even into 2008, as it was I who first reported the covering of the Gentian on Dover Road a couple months ago with the same fill that was laden with trash. They unknowingly even covered the first white gentian ever seen there.

I have concern. If you allow this MOA to go through, you'll get so many informal notifications that it will become a flood, and the ones having roadside impact will be approved as routine, because you won't have time to review them all, or to check the locations yourself.

Do something to protect our roadside vegetation. Pay more attention to it.

Survey for plants before you do roadside work.

Use local material and local plants for fill when necessary.

Promote awareness and legislation that will protect them for all of us.....Thank you for listening.