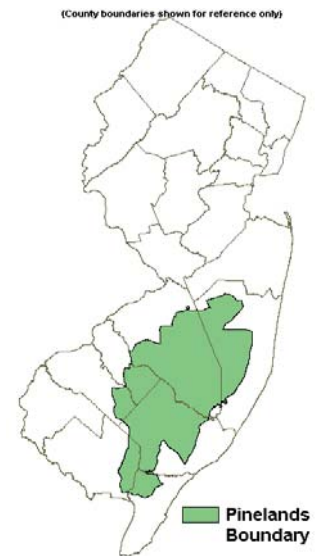


New Jersey Pinelands and South Jersey Gas Pipeline

The 1.1 million-acre National Reserve protects the globally rare Pine Barrens ecosystem, home to plants and animals found nowhere else in the United States. One of the largest freshwater aquifers in the United States can be found within the sandy soils of the Pinelands.

Pinelands National Reserve: A National Reserve is not a National Park. It is a landscape where people live and work. Some areas are designated for conservation and some are designated for development. This is done through a set of rules called the Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP).

Pinelands Commission: When the Pinelands Protection Act was passed in 1979, it established a 15-member independent public body known as the Pinelands Commission. The Commission is responsible for enforcing the CMP.



Pinelands Commission Members: Seven Commissioners are appointed by the Governor, with advice and consent of the Senate. Seven members are appointed from each of the seven counties with land in the New Jersey Pinelands region. These counties are Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Ocean County. The final member is appointed by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and serves as the federal representative. All Commissioners are unpaid volunteers.

The South Jersey Gas Pipeline

South Jersey Gas, the gas utility for the southern-most part of New Jersey, wants to put a 22-mile natural gas pipeline through the Pinelands National Reserve, in violation of the rules that protect the Pinelands. It would go through the Forest Management Areas of Cumberland, Atlantic and Cape May County for the purpose of serving their customers outside the Pinelands boundary and to serve the B.L. England Plant at Beesley's Point, Upper Township, Cape May.

The Power Plant: The B.L. England Plant at Beesley's Point, on the Great Egg Harbor, was built in 1961 and burns coal and oil. It is under orders to close down or convert to natural gas, and for the past several years has only operated for peak demand.

Why is the Pipeline a Problem for the Pinelands? The proposed pipeline violates the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP). The CMP only permits infrastructure like gas pipelines in the Forest Management Area if it is "intended to primarily serve the needs of the Pinelands" – that is, only if needed for the towns and villages within the Pinelands. N.J.A.C. 7:50-5.23. To the extent it operates at all, the B.L. England plant primarily serves demand outside the Pinelands, where the great majority of residences and businesses in our region are located. There is no exception for pipes run along or under roads. **This is to protect against the immediate harms this type of construction brings to forests and wetlands. It also protects against future development of the Forest Area that these projects bring in their wake.**

What Impact Will the Pipeline Have on the Pinelands? In addition to weakening the Pinelands protection plan, the proposed pipeline would go along populated roads and under Mill Creek, the Tuckahoe River and Cumberland Pond. Any accidents, errors or failures during and after construction would impact county residents and natural resources.

How Would Approval of the Pipeline Impact the Pinelands? The survival of New Jersey's Pinelands is entirely dependent on the regulations that were created to protect it in the first place. The Pinelands Commission would have to waive the rules of the CMP in order to allow this pipeline to go through the Forest Area. **If the Commission can't uphold their own rules, then no one will!** This will not be the last project looking for an exception to the rules. The future of the natural resources found in the Pinelands and Cumberland County are at risk.

Will Shutting Down BL England Harm South Jersey's Electrical Supply? The simple answer is "no," because that's not how the electrical grid works. According to the Director of the Center for Energy, Economic & Environmental Policy at Rutgers University, there are procedures in place to make sure there aren't reliability problems when plants retire. PJM Interconnection, an independent entity chartered by the federal government, is responsible for maintaining the electrical grid. Whenever one plant leaves the grid, other suppliers fill the gap because it is profitable to sell power into the grid.

Where Do Things Stand? In January 2014 the Commission declined to pass a resolution that would have waived the rules of the CMP and allowed South Jersey Gas to build the pipeline. The final vote was tied 7-7 and they needed 8 votes in favor for the project to move forward. Then in 2015 South Jersey Gas resubmitted an "amended" application to the Pinelands Commission and the Board of Public Utilities but it was exactly the same as the first unsuccessful application in all material respects. In a stunning move the Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission did not allow the matter to be submitted to the 15-member governing board of the Commission. She stated that the project complied with the rules and in December 2015 the Board of Public Utilities approved the application to build the pipeline. **The Pinelands Preservation Alliance filed appeals against the Board of Public Utilities along with the Sierra Club of New Jersey and Environment New Jersey in December 2015.**

Court Sends South Jersey Gas Back to Pinelands Commission

In November 2016 the Appellate Division of New Jersey Superior Court ruled that the full Commission must vote AGAIN on whether or not the South Jersey Gas pipeline project meets the standards of the CMP. The court also stated that there must be a public hearing.

We do not know when the Pinelands Commission will hold a public hearing and what the timeline is for a vote on this project. **Make sure you are on our email list so we can keep you informed in a timely fashion.**

The next regular monthly meeting of the Pinelands Commission will be December 9, 2016 at 9:30 a.m. The public is allowed to speak during general public comment. You can attend this meeting and support the Commission's denial of the South Jersey Gas Pipeline Project. Their meeting schedule for 2017 has not been released yet. The Pinelands Commission is located at 15 Springfield Road in Pemberton, NJ 08060. Learn more about this issue including talking points here:

www.pinelandsalliance.org/support/take-action-south-jersey-gas-p/

Please make sure we have your email address so we can keep you informed on this issue. We never share email addresses with anyone, ever.

Email Tom at tom@pinelandsalliance.org and tell him to add you to the email list. Or you can sign up online at www.pinelandsalliance.org