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## Pinelands Preservation Alliance

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PPA  
1989 - 2009

Celebrating 20 years of  
Pinelands Preservation

**Theresa Lettman,  
Pinelands Preservation Alliance  
November 2, 2009**

I am here again tonight to talk about the ordinance process for the residential and conservation zones in Ocean Acres. As you know the Pinelands Commission staff last week issued a determination that the 38 acres 135 lot site did not constitute critical habitat for the Northern Pine Snake. This action was done under a September 2004 Three Party Agreement, which included Barnegat Township.

I am not sure how the “three party agreement” became a part of protecting the threatened and endangered species habitat but I believe that the studies that were done were flawed and PPA’s experts believe the area is in fact critical habitat. But most importantly the public believes that those involved have failed to protect important habitat in Barnegat Township.

Some of the “public” are those who were told that their lots which were placed in the conservation zone would remain in the conservation zone and that their lots would have value. These members of the public may not care as much as I do about the ecological resource value of the Pinelands in the conservation zone, but they do care about their land value.

Barnegat Township Ordinance #2004-23, which separated lots into the residential and conservation zones, was not just about protecting critical threatened and endangered species habitat – it was to set up a zoning concept that would assure both the lots inside and the lots outside the conservation area would retain value. It was a way to save the ecological resources and the value of all the lots in Ocean Acres.

I think somehow when things got behind closed doors, and the three party agreement was signed, these issues were forgotten.

The environmental community that has been watching the Pinelands Commission – believes that the Commission has failed to protect important pinelands species habitat. But if I were a lot owner in the Ocean Acres conservation zone that was told during the ordinance process that their lots would “remain in the conservation zone” -- ***I would be outraged right now***. I would be thinking – how come this one powerful property owner gets out and I don’t? Or perhaps they might be thinking that they should not have sold their

conservation lost. Or that I will not sell my lots because someday they may be removed from the conservation area.

All this things undermine the zoning concept that was put into place in 2004 and it is now up to you- the Barnegat Township governing body to take or not take the next step.

I urge you to think about all these things as you move forward. If we the lot owners and the environmental community have lost the 38 acres, then I urge you to do all you can protect the “zoning concept” and the remaining threatened and endangered species habitat in Barnegat Township.