



## ***New Jersey Pinelands Commission***

# **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **For Immediate Release:**

#### **New Jersey Pinelands Commission mourns the loss of former Executive Director John C. Stokes**

NEW LISBON, N.J. – The New Jersey Pinelands Commission is mourning the loss of former Executive Director John C. Stokes, who passed away on July 14th. He was 70.

Mr. Stokes served as the Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission from April 2003 until his retirement on January 1, 2011. He was hired as the Commission's Executive Director after serving 23 years as the panel's Assistant Director.

A resident of Haddonfield, Camden County, Mr. Stokes was one of the original members of the Commission's staff and was one of the chief authors of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan, the rules that govern land-use, development and natural resource protection in the 938,000-acre Pinelands Area of southern New Jersey.



**John C. Stokes**

"John's service to New Jersey as Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission was invaluable," said former NJ Governor James Florio, who served as the Pinelands Commission's Chairman from 2002 to 2005. "When I served as chairman of the Pinelands Commission, I observed his practical, wise and environmentally sensitive work in action. His approach was key to protecting and preserving a fragile part of New Jersey that constitutes 20 percent of the state and that we call the Pinelands."

"New Jersey has lost one of its most valuable citizens," Florio added.

"John's contributions to the protection of the Pinelands National Reserve are deservedly recognized by all who had the privilege to work with him," said Terrence Moore, who served as the Commission's Executive Director from its inception in 1979 until 1999. "His steady and innovative leadership role in the development of the Comprehensive Management Plan and its implementation resulted in the effort to protect the New Jersey Pinelands becoming a national model. To those who worked closely with him in this endeavor, as I did for its first 20 years, he has remained a close and cherished friend and will be greatly missed."

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"John Stokes played a critical role in building and bolstering the Pinelands preservation effort, and I thought he was an effective Executive Director who brought strong leadership and professionalism to the Commission," said Commission Chairman Richard Prickett.

"I personally think there are few people that have done more to advance the cause of Pinelands preservation than John Stokes, both from his early days as a staff member to his leadership as Executive Director," said Alan W. Avery, Jr., who is the Commission's Vice Chairman and served on the Commission from 1983 to 2005 before being reappointed in December 2013.

"John Stokes was a giant in the protection of the New Jersey Pinelands," said Betty Wilson, who served as the Chairperson of the Commission from 2005 to 2008. "He dedicated his professional life to the preservation of the Pinelands National Reserve. All who knew and worked with John felt his deep personal and professional commitment to the preservation of the New Jersey Pinelands. The Pinelands National Reserve stands as a monument to John's dedication, his intelligence and his steady hand of leadership."

The Pinelands Commission is an independent state agency that is governed by a 15 member board of unpaid representatives who are appointed by the New Jersey Governor, the seven counties in the Pinelands and the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. The Commission is charged with preserving, protecting and enhancing the natural and cultural resources of the Pinelands, which is located in portions of Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Ocean counties.

As Executive Director, Mr. Stokes was responsible for the daily operations of the Commission and its staff of 43 planners, scientists, environmental reviewers, educators and others. Under Stokes' leadership, the Pinelands Commission:

- Established the Pinelands Conservation Fund, which has since helped to permanently preserve nearly 9,000 acres of land in the Pinelands and has financed numerous, critical Pinelands research and planning projects;
- Instituted innovative conservation measures in the Toms River and Oyster Creek Basins (Ocean County) that serve to better protect more than 7,000 acres of ecologically-important lands in those areas;
- Adopted 15 amendments to the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan; and
- Launched a multi-year study of the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer system that lies beneath the Pinelands and contains trillions of gallons of water.

Among other activities, Mr. Stokes served as the Chairman of the Haddonfield Planning Board, as a member of the Haddonfield Environmental Commission, as treasurer of the Camden County Council of Girl Scouts, as assistant district administrator of the National Little League,

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and as a member of the Haddon Avenue Transit Corridor Study Committee. He earned a bachelor of science degree from North Carolina State University and was a New Jersey Professional Planner and member of the American Institute of Certified Planners. After his retirement, Mr. Stokes taught courses in the Master's Program in Environmental Science at Stockton University.

Mr. Stokes is survived by his wife, Linda, his son, Dan, and his daughter, Wendy.

**ATTENTION REPORTERS/EDITORS:** High-resolution digital photos of John Stokes can be obtained by contacting Paul Leakan at [Info@pinelands.nj.gov](mailto:Info@pinelands.nj.gov).



**Above:** John C. Stokes served as the Commission's Executive Director from April 2003 until his retirement on January 1, 2011.

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