



Pinelands Facts

(August 24, 2021)

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Size

- Pinelands National Reserve, created by the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, includes approximately 1.1 million acres encompassing portions of seven counties and all or part of 56 municipalities. State-designated Pinelands Area, created by the New Jersey Pinelands Protection Act of 1979, encompasses 938,000 acres, which includes portions of 7 counties and all or part of 53 municipalities.
- The State Pinelands Area is 1,465.6 square miles -- 19 percent of the total area of New Jersey.

The Pinelands Commission

- 15-member Commission comprised of seven county representatives, seven gubernatorial appointees and one representative of the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.
- Commissioners serve staggered, three-year terms without compensation.
- Executive Director heads staff of 41 people, including planners, environmental reviewers, scientists, analysts and others.

Population and Economy

- Population of the Pinelands National Reserve - approximately 870,000 (2010 US Census).
- Population of the State-designated Pinelands Area - approximately 312,000 (2010 US Census).
- Largest Pinelands employment sectors - government, services, retail trade, construction and manufacturing.
- Agriculture is recognized in the federal and state Pinelands Acts as an industry of special significance:
 - With all of the State's cranberry production and virtually all of the blueberry production located in the Pinelands, New Jersey ranks 4th in cranberry production nationally (2019) and 5th in blueberry production nationally (2019).
 - Vegetable farming, fruit orchards, roadside produce stands, nursery/horticulture and viticulture/winemaking are all major components of the Pinelands agricultural industry.
- Other important or traditional economic activities include forestry, sand/gravel mining, and shellfishing.

Natural Resources of Regional, National and International Importance

- Region features some of the largest unbroken tracts of forest in the eastern U.S.
- Unique ecological features of the New Jersey Pinelands include acidic and nutrient-poor stream systems fed by the shallow, underlying aquifer. Supports acid-tolerant fish, frog and toad, and plant communities. Native soils are sandy, acidic, and nutrient-poor.
- High propensity for forest fires. Upland forests dominated by pitch pine and other fire-adapted species.
- Wetlands comprise approximately 35 percent of the Pinelands National Reserve: 380,400 acres, including Atlantic White Cedar swamps, hardwood swamps, pitch pine lowlands, savannahs, and coastal marshes.
- Pinelands lie above the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer, which contains an estimated 17.7 trillion gallons -- enough water to cover all of New Jersey 10 feet deep, and equal to nearly half the water consumed each year in the U.S.

- Home to many rare and unusual plants and animals, some of which reach their northern or southern geographic limits in the Pinelands.
- Pinelands National Reserve is home to 43 threatened or endangered animal species.
- The colorful Pine Barrens Treefrog (*Hyla andersonii*), a species widely associated with the unique natural history of the Pinelands, is found in very few places outside of the Pinelands.
- Noted by botanists worldwide for its unique native flora, including 27 wild orchid species and several insectivorous plant species.
- 92 threatened and endangered plant species are known to occur in the Pinelands and are protected under the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan.
- Some species of Pinelands plants, including Knieskern's Beaked Rush (*Rhynchospora knieskernii*), Pickering's Morning Glory (*Breweria pickeringii* var. *caesariensis*), and Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium americanum*) are currently found nowhere outside of the Pinelands.
- 15,000-acre Pine Plains are the most extensive pygmy forest of its type in the Country.

Special Federal and International Designations

- The Pinelands National Reserve was the first National Reserve in the nation. In 1988, the Pinelands was designated as the New Jersey Pinelands Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- Two Pinelands river systems are part of the National Wild and Scenic River System – The Great Egg Harbor River National Scenic and Recreational River and the Maurice National Scenic and Recreational River. Some 165 linear miles of the two rivers and their tributaries have the designation.
- In 1998, Congress and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration designated estuarine portions of the Mullica River watershed as the Jacques Cousteau National Estuary Research Reserve at Mullica River-Great Bay, which includes a large area of the Pinelands. The designation was based largely on the exceptional long-term scientific research and monitoring opportunities presented by the high-quality of the estuary – regarded as one of the least disturbed in the Northeast U.S.
- In 1995, the Barnegat Bay, located along the eastern portion of the Pinelands National Reserve, was accepted into the National Estuary Program by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- In 1986, the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge was designated as a “wetland of international importance” under the Ramsar Convention Treaty of 1971. Forsythe is one of only 17 such sites in the United States. Ramsar was established to protect globally significant waterfowl habitat.
- In 1975, Congress designated 6,600 acres of the Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge as the Brigantine Wilderness Area, managed under the federal Wilderness Act of 1964.
- About 10 miles of Delaware Bay shoreline at the southern end of the Pinelands National Reserve, was designated as a Hemispheric Reserve in 1985 by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge received the Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve designation in 2001.
- There are numerous Pinelands sites on the National Register of Historic Places, including restored historic villages and settlements, town historic districts, and historic structures and ruins.

Land Use Management Areas in the State Designated Pinelands Area

- Preservation Area District – 295,000 acres. The heart of the Pinelands. Virtually no development allowed except strictly limited uses in designated infill areas, or special cases under cultural housing provisions of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan.
- Special Agricultural Production Area – 37,500 acres. Berry agriculture and related development.
- Agricultural Production Area - 68,500 acres. Upland agricultural uses and related development.
- Forest Area – 257,000 acres. Low density residential development and limited roadside retail.
- Rural Development Area - 109,500 acres. Moderate density residential and business development.
- Regional Growth Area - 76,500 acres. Moderately high density residential development with commercial and industrial development. Serves as the receiving area for the transfer of development rights (see below).

- Military and Federal Installation Area - 47,000 acres. Federal enclaves where existing uses are recognized.
- Pinelands Towns (21,500 acres) and Villages (26,000 acres) - 54 spatially discrete settlements interspersed throughout Pinelands Area; development consistent with existing character.

Implementation of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan

- County and municipal master plans and zoning ordinances must conform to the Comprehensive Management Plan and be certified by the Pinelands Commission.
- Municipalities review local development proposals.
- Pinelands Project Review staff review all proposed development projects, including on-site inspections.
- Pinelands Commission verifies local approvals and may nullify or overturn local approvals that don't conform with the standards of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan.

Pinelands Development Credits (PDCs)

- The PDC Program is one of the most successful regional development transfer programs in the Nation.
- Facilitated by the PDC Bank, PDC's are bought and sold to transfer development opportunities from preservation and agricultural areas to Regional Growth Areas where they can be used to build at higher densities. Each PDC can be used to build four homes and are typically bought and sold in 1/4 credit increments called "rights."
- As of June 2021, 55,951 acres have been permanently protected through the severance of PDCs.

Management Programs and Initiatives

- The Pinelands Commission administers many resource protection programs relative to wetlands and other ecosystems, threatened and endangered species, vegetation, wildlife management, water resources, air quality, fire management and historic and cultural resources.
- The Pinelands Commission manages regulatory programs relative to forestry, agriculture, resource extraction, and waste management.
- The Pinelands Commission maintains comprehensive long-term economic and environmental monitoring programs to support its policy and regulatory decisions.

Open Space Acquisition and Preservation

- As of June 2020, more than half of the Pinelands Area (479,000 acres) has been permanently preserved as open space through a variety of acquisitions, easements and other programs.
- The State has acquired 5,771 acres under the Pinelands Limited Practical Use Program.
- Non-profit organizations currently own and manage about 12,000 acres of permanently protected land.