

## Gov. McGreevey Announces New Pinelands Commission Appointments

by Michael Gallaway, our Pinelands Issues Coordinator, and Carleton Montgomery, Executive Director, Pinelands Preservation Alliance

Governor McGreevey finally made good on his promise to get the Pinelands Commission back on track. In announcing his new nominations, Governor McGreevey said that he looked to these individuals to lead the Pinelands Commission back onto the path of preservation from which it has too often strayed in recent years. Although time will surely tell, at this point it looks like it was worth the wait. McGreevey helped close a circle in the history of Pinelands Protection with the nomination of former Governor Jim Florio to chair the Commission. As a NJ congressman in the 1970's, Florio was one of the key architects of Pinelands protection and sponsored the federal legislation creating the Pinelands National Reserve. With his wealth of experience and history in Pinelands preservation, Florio will hopefully provide the leadership needed to address the complex issues the Commission faces.

McGreevey had a unique opportunity to reshape the Commission as all seven gubernatorial appointments were open. Along with Candace Ashmun and Steve Lee—long-standing members of the body who were nominated for new terms by the Governor—the new Commissioners will include Betty Wilson, Ed Lloyd, Bob Hagaman, and Guy Campbell. Betty Wilson is a long-time public servant, a former member of the state Assembly and high-ranking official at the Department of Environmental Protection, and was a founder and member of the Board of Trustees of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance. Ed Lloyd is the director of the Environmental Law Clinic at Columbia University Law School and for many years has been a trailblazing lawyer fighting for better environmental protection in New Jersey. Bob Hagaman is currently the mayor of Mullica Township in the Pines, and has demonstrated a consistent allegiance to preserving Mullica's natural areas and rural landscape. Pastor Guy Campbell is a Baptist minister from Moorestown, and the first African American Pinelands Commissioner. We do not know Pastor Campbell as well as the other new Commissioners, but we do know he believes in the importance of protecting the living world of the Pine Barrens. Candy Ashmun is no stranger to Sierra Club members, having served the NJ Chapter in a number of capacities, as well as being an original Pinelands Commissioner and a driving force behind the State Plan.

*"The Pinelands protection program has helped create a strong sense among the citizens of our state that the Pinelands is a special place that merits special protection..."*

Mr. Florio and the new Commissioners face a number of challenges that threaten to erode the goal of preserving an intact Pinelands ecosystem. Water quality and quantity, increasing growth pressures in the Regional Growth Areas, and endangered species protection are among the pressing issues that are demanding attention. The Pinelands Commission's long term ecological monitoring program has found that runoff from development and upland farming is contaminating Pine Barrens surface waters by adding nutrients (nitrogen) and raising the pH of these waters. These chemical changes make the waters appealing to non-Pine Barrens species of plants and animals, which compete with and often displace the distinctive Pine Barrens communities of so many rare, threatened and endangered species.

Just as troubling, well testing throughout the Pinelands and neighboring regions is revealing widespread pollution of the aquifers, including contamination with radioactive radium, mercury, nutrients and volatile organic compounds. The sources of this contamination include agricultural chemicals, leaking dumps, and years of unregulated spills.

The Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan has been very successful in diverting development from most Pine Barrens natural habitats within the Pinelands National Reserve. It has, at least temporarily, saved vast stretches of forests, streams and wetlands from development, and slowed the degradation of water quality in the region's aquifers and surface waters. The Pinelands protection program has helped create a strong sense among the citizens of our state that the Pinelands is a special place that merits special protection before it is lost forever.

Yet the past twenty years have also revealed deficiencies in the program and raised fundamental questions about whether existing rules and plans are sufficient to save the Pine Barrens forever. It is becoming evident that the pattern, level and design of development permitted within and around the Pinelands is slowly destroying the region's natural infrastructure—potentially dooming the Pine Barrens to a slow and tragic demise. Those who think the Pinelands are "saved," need to look a little closer. Let's hope Mr. Florio and the new members of the Commission will do it. ☞

## Fall Comes to the Hamilton-Trenton Marsh

by Carolyn Foote Edelmann, of the Central Jersey Group

excerpted from US1 Newspaper, Oct 16, 2002, with permission

My favorite haven, on foot and by kayak, has become the Hamilton-Trenton Marsh. I am frequently blessed by the company of Mary and Charles Leck, retired Rider University botanist and Rutgers University ornithologist, respectively. The Lecks turn formidable talents to exploring and documenting these nearby natural wonders. In the Marsh power towers rise. Highway abutments circle and stretch. Yet visitors can experience wilderness. Special gear is not essential beyond (preferably waterproof) hiking boots, sufficient water and bug spray in season.

This shimmering wetland comprises 1,250 acres. It straddles Trenton, Hamilton, and Bordentown. John A. Roebing

Memorial Park, at entry, consists of 260 acres, whittled to 200 when highways threaded through. A stately stairway leads to fake, fruitful Spring Lake, named for springs sacred to Leni Lenapes. The pale staircase testifies to faded glory, — White City Amusement Park (circa 1800). Patrons in fancy clothes toured amusements; bathers slid down a primitive water slide. The remainder of the Marsh belongs to various municipalities and some private owners: i.e., it's not officially protected.

In this "ancient meander of the Delaware River," Leni Lenapes and other tribes gathered for ritual and reunion more than 10,000 years ago. Europeans are Johnnys-come-lately. Revolutionary war boats rest at a Crosswicks Creek bend, scuttled by loyalists, lest they fall into British hands. It is stirring to kayak past on

## ACTION ALERT: HELP BRING DOWN THE CURTAIN ON THE EMPIRE TRACT DEVELOPMENT

by Captain Bill Sheehan and Hugh Carola, Meadowlands Issues Coordinators

Lately many people have been asking our opinions concerning the redevelopment options for the Continental Arena site in the Hackensack Meadowlands. Needless to say, we have some pretty strong ideas. Many people have also been asking us if there's anything they can do to make sure that, regardless of what happens to the Arena, the Empire Tract wetlands get saved.

A quick history: In 1996, The Virginia-based Mills Corporation proposed to fill in over 200 acres of the Tract to build "Meadowlands Mills," a mega-mall, hotel and office complex. They also proposed a mitigation plan that would have transformed the remaining 400 acres of wetlands into their personal storm sewer.

Since 1996, New Jersey's environmental community (the Sierra Club, Hackensack Riverkeeper, NJ Audubon, and other groups large and small) have never wavered in our position that the Empire Tract is an integral part of the Meadowlands ecosystem. Additionally, the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Environmental Protection Agency have all gone on record indicating that the Empire Tract wetlands are of national and regional importance; and done so in both the Clinton and Bush administrations! Many wetlands scientists have submitted data and opinions regarding the site's importance to the ecology of the entire Meadowlands.

So far, the Mills proposal has been stopped. In light of the above, we firmly believe that no one—not even the Mills Corporation itself—thinks that "Meadowlands Mills" will ever see the light of day.

But Mills is still determined to build something here and has spent tens of millions of dollars in the attempt. So now we come to the Continental Arena site. I suspect that most North Jerseyans have heard of their new plan as well as the competing proposals by Westfield and Hartz. As much as we would all love to see Mills simply leave, that's not going to happen. But, what makes their staying palatable, and what sets their proposal apart from the others, is what the company proposes to do with the Empire Tract.

Mills and its partner, Mack-Cali, have offered to donate the Empire Tract in its entirety to the State of New Jersey for conservation—if and when their Arena redevelopment proposal is approved. The State—and Bergen County—would receive 600 acres of critical open space and wildlife habitat at no cost to taxpayers. Sounds good, eh? Well, no sooner had Mills made the offer but the NJ Department of Transportation and the Port Authority began secret negotiations on how to turn the Tract into a massive wetlands mitiga-

tion bank—a designation that could fast-track wetlands destruction elsewhere in the New York / New Jersey harbor.

The Bergen Record reported on Nov. 21, 2002 that Governor McGreevey might prefer that the Empire Tract be turned over to the NJ Sports & Exposition Authority for, among other things, a practice field for the New York Jets! It is outrageous that our Governor—who received our endorsement—would even consider such a travesty. While title to the Empire Tract may be part of a deal, protection of the Tract as a wetland is the only acceptable option.

Governor McGreevey should take a long, hard look at the statements he made about the Meadowlands—the real Meadowlands, not the Arena—during his campaign for Governor. During his endorsement interview with The Record he stated, "I concur with the opinion expressed by Acting Governor DiFrancesco..." regarding the conservation of the Meadowlands in general and the Empire Tract in particular. Among other points, Mr. DiFrancesco had stated that Mills should not be permitted to build in wetlands.

To its credit, the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC) has adopted a conservation ethic for the Meadowlands and, as you are reading these words, it is preparing a new Master Plan for the region. Under the Plan, all of the remaining wetlands of the Meadowlands will be preserved. According to NJMC Executive Director Bob Ceberio, "The best plan for the Meadowlands is one with no wetlands loss."

So here's where we are: The NJMC, Mills, The Sierra Club, Hackensack Riverkeeper, all our colleagues in conservation, and the people of the Meadowlands region, all support the preservation of the Empire Tract. We are all waiting for the Governor to do the same. Please write, fax or e-mail Governor McGreevey TODAY. Tell him that you want the Empire Tract preserved, protected and restored for conservation. Period. Just tell him to do the right thing.

Governor James E. McGreevey  
PO Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625  
Phone: 609-292-6000  
Fax: 609-292-3454  
To send him an e-mail, go to:  
[www.state.nj.us/governor/govmail.html](http://www.state.nj.us/governor/govmail.html)

My friends, we are in the last act of this absurd drama. With just a little more help on all our parts this will be the LAST Empire Tract Action Alert you ever read. Let's bring that final curtain down! Contact us at 201-968-0808 and by e-mail at [Hugh@HackensackRiverkeeper.org](mailto:Hugh@HackensackRiverkeeper.org). ☞



species enhances the case of local ecologists, proposing Federal protection of this vulnerable region as a National Wildlife Refuge. If you know Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, Oceanville, you know what designation accomplishes for wildlife and the human spirit.

I could not induce either Leck to name favorite creature, nature site, or season. Both described "Ice Hikes" on the frozen Marsh: Walk-sliding over Marsh ice, these scientists have seen beaver breath on still

(continued on page 9)