

Byrne Report: Strict Zoning For Pinelands

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Trenton — The state should assume sweeping powers to control zoning in 51 South Jersey pinelands municipalities — including a total ban on new housing in six Burlington County communities, according to a Byrne administration report.

The report, a preliminary draft prepared for the Pinelands Review Committee, said a housing ban should be extended to parts of 18 other municipalities in Burlington, Ocean and Atlantic counties which fall within a

newly designated pinelands preservation zone.

The latest in a long series of state and federal pinelands studies dating as far back as 1960, the report still faces administrative and legislative approvals before being put into effect.

A committee member, who asked not to be identified, said yesterday the report could also be modified before it is presented to Governor Byrne.

Prepared by the Division on State and Regional Planning, the report delineates what areas within an estimated 2,000-square mile region of southern New Jersey pinelands should be protected.

The report was released to the 13-member Pinelands Review Committee earlier this week. The committee, composed of environmentalists, lawyers and some developers, was named last August to study ways of preserving the pine barrens — long considered to be a fragile and unique environmental area.

According to a copy of the report, obtained by the New Jersey Bulletin, the entire communities of Woodland, Bass River, Washington, Tabernacle, and Shamong townships and Medford Borough are proposed as part of a "preservation" zone.

The report says land in the preservation zone should be reserved for limited agricultural use such as cranberry and blueberry farming, and for "low density" recreation such as hiking and canoeing. Logging would also be allowed in the preservation zone, as long as it conformed to the "fragile

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the pinelands.

According to the state report, which still faces a series of administrative and legislative approvals before implementation, the 515-square-mile preservation zone would encompass parts of 24 communities in Burlington, Camden, Ocean and Atlantic counties, and would form a contiguous "wilderness" area with Wharton State Forest, Bass River State Forest and Penn State Forest.

Response to the report was guarded at best. Bass River Township Mayor Floyd West, who has long been an advocate of pinelands preservation, said he's encouraged by the report, which designates a little more than half of his township for preservation.

"But I'm not going to get very excited about it until I see Governor Byrne move in a real way to implement legislation to preserve and protect the pinelands," West said.

West, a pine barrens resident who has seen scores of reports urging preservation over the last 20 years, said that until the plan is implemented the report "is nothing more than something to make newspaper headlines, and then be shelved."

J. Garfield DeMarco, a cranberry developer who owns approximately 8,000 acres of land in Woodland Township, which would also be included in the preservation zone, described the report as a "pie in the sky proposal."

DeMarco predicted that legislators will not want to give the state far reaching land use powers over local officials in the pinelands area.

"That would hit so many booby traps and ambushes in the Legislature that it would never pass," DeMarco said. "That is ridiculous, local officials would not stand for that type of thing."

DeMarco, former chairman of the Pinelands Environmental Council, which was stripped of its duties two years ago after its own plan for pinelands protection was ridiculed as a "land speculator's dream," said the committee's preservation zone is almost consistent with the one his agency developed several years ago.

But Nan Hunter Walnut, a Pinelands Review Committee member, said the proposed preserved zone includes more acreage than the council's plan.

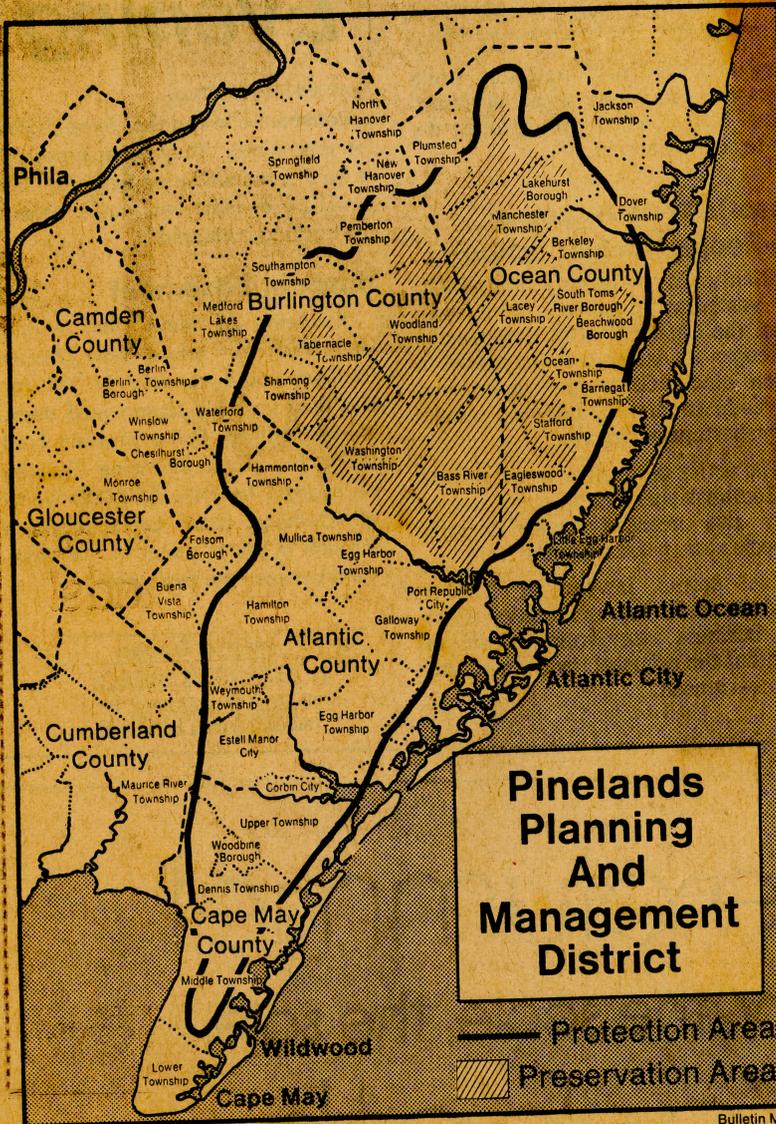
Committee members agreed that the report will probably be modified before its final adoption. The committee plans a series of public hearings and educational sessions on the plan in the upcoming months.

The plan will also be discussed at the next review committee meeting July 24 at 8 P.M. at Burlington County Community College.

"One thing I believe the committee has to address is the economic impact this plan will have on the area," said committee member Thomas J. Hickey, an attorney and former environmental engineer.

Hickey said the committee "did not have the time nor the capacity" to evaluate how townships that may have development curtailed will survive, but added that the issue must be addressed before the report is delivered to Byrne.

Towns Listed in Pines Report



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Trenton — Here are the municipalities included in the Pinelands Preservation Zone, as suggested by a state report:

In Burlington County; all of Washington, Bass River, Shamong, Tabernacle, Woodland townships and Medford Lakes Borough, and parts of Medford Lakes Borough and Pemberton and New Hanover townships.

In Camden County: parts of Winslow and Waterford townships.

In Ocean County: most of Manchester Township and parts of Plumstead, Jackson, Berkeley, Lacey, Barnegat, Stafford, Eagleswood and Little Egg Harbor townships.

In Atlantic County: Hammonton, Mullica, Galloway townships; Egg Harbor and Port Republic cities.

These municipalities are included as part of the "protection zone."

In Burlington County: parts of Medford, Southampton, North Hanover and Springfield townships, and Wrightstown Borough.

In Cape May County: parts of Middle, Dennis and Upper townships and Woodbine Borough.

In Cumberland County: Vineland City and Maurice River Township.

Also Monroe Township in Gloucester County, and Berlin Township and Berlin and Chesilhurst boroughs in Camden County.

In Atlantic County: parts of Buena Vista, Hamilton, Egg Harbor, and Weymouth townships; Folsom Borough and Estell Manor and Gorbin cities.

In Ocean County: Dover and Ocean townships, Lakehurst, South Toms River and Beachwood boroughs.

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