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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

February 6, 1981

COMMITTEES:
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Department of Environmental Protection
Pinelands Commission
P. O. Box 7
New Lisbon, NJ 08064

Dear Commissioners:

I regret that I am unable to appear before you in person this morning because of my responsibilities in Washington. However, as the prime sponsor of the Federal Authorizing Legislation, I would like to make my views known to the members of the Commission on the question of implementation of the Pinelands Plan.

My overriding concern is for the protection of the Pinelands, through thoughtful and sensitive execution of the Commission's compromise Plan. That is to say, in carrying out the provisions of the Plan, I would urge the Commission members to make the fullest possible use of local judgement and discretion, compatible with the plan's goals.

It is imperative that the local communities have maximum flexibility to adjust their individual master plans to the standards set forth in the Pinelands Plan, in order to adapt to unique local conditions.

In my opinion, it would be a mistake for the Commission to set itself up, in effect, as a regional zoning board, passing judgement on all developmental matters. The intent of the Congress was that the Commission should restrict itself and its activities to reviewing those projects which have area wide impact.

The Pinelands proposal is the beginning of a dynamic process which will require continuous modification. On this point, local participation is mandatory. This factor seems to be one of the fears most frequently presented by opponents of the plan, i.e. lack of local participation and anticipated insensitive staff interpretations. As public appointees and employees, Commission members and staff must, within the confines of the Plan's goals, be responsive to the legitimate concerns of effected citizens, officials and interests. To fail to be responsive is to make more difficult the achievement of our mutually held aspirations for this very important section of New Jersey.

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It is my intention to work for federal funding to provide assistance to individuals and local communities to aid them in the orderly implementation of the Plan. On balance, the intent and process provided for in this Plan can prove beneficial to all concerned interests. I emphasize that the Plan, however, should not be regarded as a final product, but rather that it must be continually modified to account for newly acquired data and evolving conditions within the area. I would, therefore, charge this Commission with the responsibility for seeing this process evolve with a maximum opportunity for cooperative local involvement.

I appreciate the opportunity to present my views to the Commissioners, I congratulate you on your efforts on behalf of the entire State, and I look forward to working with you in this important area.

Sincerely,


JAMES J. FLORIO
Member of Congress