

ANJEC Comments

DEP Public Hearing

May 7, 2014 – Millville

Sale of Preserved Open Space Land for Private Use

(formerly known as Durand Property)

Cheryl Reardon, ANJEC Project Director in Southern New Jersey.

ANJEC is a nonprofit organization that works to support the efforts of environmental commissions in 388 towns in New Jersey. We also coordinate the work of the South Jersey Bayshore Coalition (www.sjbayshore.org), which is united effort of over 20 active non-profits working to protect the natural resources of the South Jersey Bayshore region.

ANJEC opposes the sale of the 80 acre parcel of land, formerly known as the Durand property.

Just 10-months ago, the NJDEP Green Acres preserved this land using public funds because of its extraordinary environmental and habitat value as well as its connectivity to adjacent preserved lands. This land is integral to one of the largest and most pristine and critical tracts of forest in all of southern New Jersey.

In addition, this land is upland property with significant recharge capacity essential to recharge of the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer, which millions of people throughout South Jersey rely on for their water supply.

This deal sets a terrible precedent for the state. If this transfer is allowed, **no** preserved lands will be safe from being “flipped” for private use

A sale of such a large property by the NJDEP is unprecedented and undermines over 50 years of public trust in open space acquisitions and sheds a dark cloud over the future of land preservation throughout New Jersey.

New Jersey law requires that municipal governments adhere to strict standards for land diversions of preserved land. The State should absolutely be required to abide by the same rules and standards that it requires of municipalities.

Green Acres preserved this land for all the right reasons... nothing has changed since the NJDEP purchased this land just 10-months ago. The same environmental values exist today as they did last year. This exceptional piece of property must remain preserved as it provides the connecting link in the forested Wildlife Management Area that surrounds it. NJDEP's diversion should not be a consideration.

Thank You.

www.anjec.org



**association of new jersey
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