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## **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

### **OFFICE OF NATURAL LANDS MANAGEMENT**

#### **Notice of Readoption**

#### **Natural Areas and the Natural Areas System**

#### **Readoption: N.J.A.C. 7:5A**

Authority: N.J.S.A. 13:1B-3, 13:1B-15.4 et seq., 13:1B-15.12a et seq., 13:1B-15.100 et seq., 13:1D-9, and 13:1L-1 et seq.

Authorized By: Bob Martin, Commissioner, Department of Environmental Protection.

Effective Date: April 12, 2017.

New Expiration Date: April 12, 2024.

**Take notice** that pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:14B-5.1, the Natural Areas and the Natural Areas System rules at N.J.A.C. 7:5A are readopted and shall continue in effect for a seven-year period. The rules had been scheduled to expire on May 16, 2017. The Department of Environmental Protection (Department) has reviewed these rules and has determined that the rules should be readopted because they are necessary, reasonable, and proper for the purpose for which they were originally promulgated. In accordance with N.J.S.A. 52:14B-5.1.c(1), timely filing of this notice extended the expiration date of the chapter seven years from the date of filing.

The Natural Areas and the Natural Areas System rules establish the criteria for designation of natural areas, and provide standards and procedures for the administration of the

Natural Areas System. Natural areas are those lands or waters owned by the Department or upon which the Department holds a conservation easement, which have either retained their natural character or which support rare or vanishing species of plants or animals that are worthy of preservation. Natural areas are assigned to, and managed by, either the Division of Fish and Wildlife as part of a Wildlife Management Area, by the Division of Parks and Forestry as part of a State park or forest, or by the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust as part of the Trust's preserve system. In addition, the rules establish procedures for designation of lands to the Natural Areas System, and for development and approval of natural area management plans. The rules also specify the interim management practices for natural areas prior to approval of a management plan, and the duties of the Natural Areas Council, an advisory board to the Commissioner of the Department. Additionally, the rules include procedures for research and specimen collection in natural areas, and identify and list the 44 designated natural areas as components of the Natural Areas System, among other provisions.