

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **WOODBINE OPEN SPACE ECO-PARK BREAKS GROUND**

**Woodbine**—Mayor William Pikolycky is pleased to announce that Woodbine's Cape May County Open Space Eco-Park will break ground on Tuesday, March 20, 2018, in a ceremony commencing at 1 pm.

The ceremony will take place in back of the Woodbine Elementary School, just past the entrance to the Cape May County Library Woodbine Branch, 800 Monroe Street, Woodbine.

Funding for this project was received from the Cape May County Freeholders under the Open Space Program, showcasing the County's policy change from a strictly acquisition program to innovative public development projects while maintaining and expanding the original objectives.

With the Open Space program funding, the Borough will be able to preserve a 25-acre wooded tract adjacent to the Woodbine Elementary Community School and develop a facility which includes active and passive recreation opportunities with a strong orientation towards environmental enrichment and enhancement of the area's ecological values as part of a campus already dedicated to education and recreation.

Major components of this project include environmental interpretative stations, fitness stations, walking trails, a general purpose field, pavilion, gazebo, bike racks, benches, picnic tables, a rain garden, and related amenities which will help to position Woodbine and the Cape May County Eco-Park and Recreation Area as a destination for cyclists, equestrians, and pedestrians. It will especially serve as a setting for a "classroom in nature" for students and visitors who can appreciate the special qualities of this site.

It will not only enhance and expand opportunities for Borough residents but also for the many visitors who enjoy bicycling and hiking on the many County, State, and National Trail Systems which converge in Woodbine as it will eventually be part of the County-wide bikeway system.

This 25-acre wooded track is situated in the center of town and at the convergence of the Coastal Heritage Trail, High Point to Cape May Trail, the Bayshore Heritage Byway, and the Pine Barrens Byway.

This project will also link to other important resources such as Belleplain State Forest, and Cape May County's first instructional site of The Richard Stockton University of New Jersey at Anne Azeez Hall at the Sam Azeez Museum of Woodbine Heritage The Eco-Park and Recreation Area is immediately adjacent to the Cape May County Library Branch and the Woodbine Community School, which includes our community indoor gymnasium.

Cape May County Eco-Park in Woodbine also includes a bikeway extension, funded by New Jersey Department of Transportation which is part of an overall plan to interconnect publically-owned sites within the Borough to New Jersey's High Point to Cape May bikeway system and is part of the proposed County-long bikeway systems, which would ultimately go from Belleplain State Forest to the County Park and Zoo. The Borough's bikepath system is used extensively by residents and visitors alike through organized walking groups. This current phase would extend the bikeway system along Webster Avenue which is heavily travelled by bicyclists.

Woodbine is one of a select number of communities identified by Pinelands as suited for development and redevelopment within the Pinelands Preserve and the only municipality within Atlantic and Cape May Counties recommended for a managed development program as a means of curbing indiscriminate development in environmentally sensitive areas elsewhere in the Pinelands. It has been designated a Pinelands Town, the equivalent to a Town Center under the State Plan.

"The first day of Spring is a fitting day to officially begin construction of this ecologically based educational and recreational open space that will benefit not only our neighbors and visitors throughout Cape May County but also serve the larger educational community, including our partner Stockton University," explained Mayor Pikolycky. "Stockton graduate students and students from Cape May County Technical School played a significant role in the design and development of our Eco-Park, with an emphasis placed on the environmental aspect, thus already making this an educational opportunity for locally-sourced students."