

THE END OF THESE WOODS: WORKING-CLASS ENVIRONMENTALISM AND THE NEW
JERSEY PINELANDS JETPORT by

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A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School-Newark

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Graduate Program in History

written under the direction of Neil Maher

and approved by

Newark, New Jersey

October, 2017

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On the night before Valentine's Day, 1969, more than four hundred people, residents of Ocean and Burlington Counties, packed Toms River, New Jersey's National Guard Armory. The crowd had come to protest the construction of a massive supersonic jetport deep in the Pine Barrens of southern New Jersey. Fearing noise, air and water pollution, and congestion, these protestors were eager to learn what they could do to make sure the project would not move forward. They were furious that a state commission had recommended their region as a jetport site, and that politicians from the north of the state hoped to create a new state authority to expedite its construction.

Despite the palpable anger in the Armory that night, there was little chance of the protest becoming radical. Instead of taking to the streets, as others did in the tumultuous late 1960s, those in attendance listened patiently as local Assemblyman John Brown told them that "the only way you can influence these people [legislators] is to write letters and tell your friends to write letters." As they filed out of the Armory ninety minutes later, each protestor dutifully collected a sheet of paper with the contact information for eight prominent New Jersey politicians to contact.¹

The Pinelands were hardly alone in opposing the jetport. Since 1959, when the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey had first claimed the need for a fourth major airport in the New York metropolitan area, communities across northern and central New Jersey, Long Island, and upstate New York had been considered as a possible site. Each had made their opposition abundantly clear. By 1969, only a few potential sites in central and southern New Jersey were still being entertained.

¹ Richard Brinster, "400 Attend Protest Against Proposed Jetport," *Asbury Park Press*, February 14, 1969.

One such site was Roosevelt, a tiny rural municipality in western Monmouth County. While anxious of the same specter of chaotic and environmentally damaging development as the Pinelands, the citizens of Roosevelt responded quite differently. Just three weeks after the Armory meeting, twenty members of Roosevelt's Citizen's Committee Against the Jetport in Central New Jersey picketed outside the New Jersey State Museum in Trenton, where legislators were holding hearings on the bill authorizing the creation of the new Jetport Authority. Wearing gas masks and holding brightly painted signs bearing slogans like "Let Us Breathe," "Pollution is No Solution," and "I Used to Hear the Birds Sing," the young marchers staged a silent but highly visible protest² (See Figure 1).

In many ways, the Roosevelt protest more neatly conforms to our idea of what political protest in the late 1960s looked like than their staid Pinelands counterpart. With their rhyming slogans, colorful signs ("produced by several of the better-known artists in the United States" according to the group's press release)³, youthful energy, and mute theatricality, the protestors share noticeable similarities with the counterculture of the late 1960s. The Pinelands residents that filled the Toms River Armory on the other hand, were decidedly not members of any anti-establishment youth culture. Most of the four hundred people at the meeting on February 13 were elderly, having relocated to the area's retirement communities in the previous few years. They were clearly grayer and more as

² Edward Rosskam, March 4, 1969, Borough of Roosevelt Historical Collection, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ, Box 8.

³ Press Release of the Citizen's Committee Against the Jetport in Central New Jersey, March 4, 1969, Borough of Roosevelt Historical Collection, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ, Box 15, Folder 10.

they patiently listened to the anti-jetport speeches of three local politicians and the leader of a local environmental organization.⁴ (See Figure 2)

Looking back, the Roosevelt marchers are also more familiar examples of late 1960s environmentalists. As the scope of green activists expanded beyond wilderness preservation and park creation, environmentalism became, along with the civil rights, feminist, and anti-war movements, a common form of left-wing social and political protest. Radical politics and direct action protests became entwined with mainstream environmentalism by the end of the 1960s.⁵ Coming a little more than a year before the first Earth Day, the Citizen's Committee anticipated many of the visual cues of that event, which would later become an important part of American's collective historical memory. The gas masks worn by the Roosevelt marchers immediately identify them to us as archetypal environmentalists. "The gas mask," environmental historian Finis Dunaway writes, "became an environmental icon that burrowed into public consciousness and symbolized and all-encompassing crisis in the making."⁶

In addition to marking the Roosevelt protestors as countercultural, the gas masks carry other symbolic meanings. As environmental iconography, the masks also remind us of some of the common assumptions that we make about environmentalists in the early days of that movement. They are almost always featured on the faces of white, middle-

⁴ Uncredited, *Asbury Park Press*, February 14, 1969.

⁵ On the connection of the counterculture and American environmentalism, see Adam Rome, "Give Earth a Chance: The Environmental Movement and the Sixties," *The Journal of American History* 90, no. 2 (2003): 541-552; Frank Zelko, *Make it a Green Peace: The Rise of Countercultural Environmentalism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁶ Finis Dunaway, *Seeing Green: The Use and Abuse of American Environmental Images*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 50;

class Americans. The incongruity of seeing this deadly serious technology of war in tranquil suburban settings, often being worn by children, focused environmental narratives on members of those groups. They also highlight the growing concern of environmentalists on the dangers of industrial pollution.

While the protestors who attended the Armory meeting were mostly retirees only newly arrived to the Pinelands, knowing the region's history is still critical for understanding their less confrontational style of opposition. Since the arrival of European settlers, the Pine Barrens had been poorer, less populous, a less developed than the rest of the New Jersey. Fortunes were extracted from the region by the iron forging and charcoal industries in the nineteenth century, but by the 1960s most residents lived in small, isolated, working-class communities on the fringes of the post-World War II development boom that gripped most of the rest of the state. To most observers, then and now, the region would not be considered very promising as a hotbed of late 1960s environmental activism.

This assumption is a misleading one. The fact that the Roosevelt protestors are so instantly recognizable as environmentalists, sends the message that their form of activism is the only one that may be properly labelled as environmentalism. One of the most common critiques of environmentalism is that has traditionally been the preserve of elite, upper- and middle-class nature lovers. While this is often a perfectly valid criticism of organized environmentalists, it is incomplete. In recent years, the cast of historical characters that have made up American environmentalism has become larger and more diverse. Environmental history is not only about the relationship between people and

their environments, but also the interactions between different groups of people that take place in environmental contexts. Historians such as Richard Judd, Karl Jacoby, and Louis Warren have used the methods of social history to access the voices of workers, poachers, hunters, indigenous peoples, and the poor, showing how these groups have both resisted what we commonly think of as environmentalism while simultaneously creating and practicing their own brand of environmentalism.⁷

Historians of working class environmentalism have thus far tended to focus on the early days of conservation in the late nineteenth century. The outdoor labor of that period – hunting, poaching, forestry work, mining – was intimately tied to the extraction of natural resources, and those who labored in nineteenth nature developed their own beliefs about the common stewardship of the land and a reverence for nature that would become crucial to the development of conservationism. As Richard Judd argues, despite the notable contributions of wealthy elites, “local people, struggling to define or redefine their relation to the land, also contributed heavily to America’s conservation legacy.”⁸ This understanding of working class attitudes to nineteenth century conservationism must be extended to the environmentalist activism of the mid-twentieth as well.⁹

⁷ The literature on working-class environmentalism is constantly growing and is often presented as an opportunity for other historians to take up the challenge of expanding and complicating our understanding of environmental history. See Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* 2nd Edition, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001, 2014); Louis S. Warren, *The Hunter’s Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth-Century America*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Richard W. Judd, *Common Lands, Common People: The Origins of Conservation in Northern New England*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

⁸ Judd, *Common Lands, Common People*, 10.

⁹ Some environmental historians have started this process, though they have tended to focus on the environmental positions of labor unions and other organized groups. See Erik Loomis, *Empire of Timber: Labor Unions and the Pacific Northwest Forests*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Chad Montrie, *Making a Living: Work and Environment in the United States*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

This more complicated framework for understanding who qualifies as an environmentalist has not yet been applied to the case of the Pinelands jetport. Previous examinations of the opposition to the project have centered almost entirely around the organized groups of environmentalists involved. This has led to a one-dimensional view of what a jetport opponent jetport looked like. According to sociologist Joan Goldstein, anti-jetport activists in the Pinelands, “were a highly select group of upper class and upper middle class persons with specialized leisure activities or professions that connected their interests to the continuance of the natural state of the Pine Barrens.”¹⁰ This is the first of two misconceptions that this thesis attempts to remedy.

The characterization of environmentalism as a pursuit of elite or middle-class Americans often carries with it an assumption that any relationship between environmentalists and working class people is necessarily strained, or even entirely antagonistic. This hostile relationship is presumed to go both ways. In the now classic article, “Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?": Work and Nature, historian Richard White claims that most modern environmentalists “equate productive work in nature with destruction. They ignore the ways that work itself is a means of knowing nature while celebrating the virtues of play and recreation in nature.”¹¹ Just as common is the caricature of working class people as hopelessly anthropocentric, concerned only with extracting wealth from nature and moving on.

¹⁰ Joan Goldstein, *Environmental Decision Making in Rural Locales: The Pine Barrens*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981), 71.

¹¹ Richard White, “Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?": Work and Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), 171;

This thesis will closely examine three distinct groups involved in the jetport controversy. Along with the aforementioned working class Pinelands residents opponents of the jetport and organized environmentalists, I will include proponents of the jetport proposal. These categories carry their own complications and dangers. As the jetport became a contentious political issue, thousands of individuals expressed their opinions on the matter. Oftentimes, they did so in ways that make it difficult to neatly distinguish one group from another. Support for the Pinelands site mostly came from upper- and middle-class suburban residents of northern New Jersey, many of whom had fought against earlier jetport proposals closer to New York City, and who saw building jetport in the south as a convenient way to permanently protect their own backyards from development. However, they were only able to come so near to succeeding because some in the Pine Barrens indicated their own support for the jetport. Because the overwhelming majority of Pinelands residents opposed the jetport, I refer to opponents throughout simply as Pinelands locals or residents, and specify when I am referring to working class jetport supporters.

This thesis tells the interconnected stories of these three groups in three sections. Section I – Environmental Ideologies – interrogates the diverse values each attached to the Pinelands’ unique natural history, and the different ways in which they approached the concepts of wilderness, conservation, and environmentalism. While individuals and organizations can be neatly separated into competing pro- and anti-jetport camps, the motivations and ideologies that compelled them to take one position or another are more complicated. Depending on their geographical and cultural backgrounds, jetport

supporters could arguments based on very different worldviews. However, they ultimately shared an ideology that emphasized economic growth and progress over any intrinsic value of nature. On the anti-jetport side, working class locals and environmentalists did more than merely coexist as political allies of convenience. Over the course of the 1960s, each group changed the scope of their environmental ideologies. Workers became more comfortable with using ecological arguments, even if they preferred to identify as conservationists rather than environmentalists. For their part, environmentalists learned to position themselves as part of a broader anti-jetport coalition beyond nature lovers and ecologists.

Section II – Spheres of Political Influence – details how disagreements about political rights and representations played as large a role in derailing the jetport proposal as concerns about damage to the Pine Barrens ecosystem. It locates the opposition of both locals and environmentalists in broader disputes about the proper role of federal, state, and local authorities. Environmentalism is often associated with the expansion of the regulatory power of the federal government. The period from the early 1960s to the early 1970s saw the creation or expansion of federal environmental laws and regulatory agencies to combat pollution, species extinction, and the loss of American wilderness land. Sometimes lost in this blizzard of federal activity are the smaller-scale environmental battles whose outcomes were more dependent on local circumstances than the national mood. Working class residents of the Pine Barrens were wary of the imposition of any outside political authority, be it from the federal or state governments, and found themselves at odds with environmentalists over the prospect of the region

becoming a federally protected park or preserve. While most environmentalists were open about their desire to see the Pinelands protected under the National Parks System, they learned to embrace the principle of local autonomy on the question of the jetport. The conflict over the jetport site also touched on profound divides between the northern and southern halves of New Jersey, with the politically liberal north pushing for the jetport and the more conservative south in opposition.

Finally, Section III – Social Identity and Resistance – explores how the cultural identities of opposition groups were intimately linked with the strategies of resistance that they chose to employ. As we can see by comparing the meeting at the Toms River National Guard Armory and the Roosevelt protest, opposition to the jetport manifested in differently depending on who was articulating it. The language used by all the relevant groups involved in the jetport controversy was, at all times, charged with political and cultural meanings. The resistance of working class Pinelands residents relied upon, and expressed, a different set of cultural values than that of upper- and middle-class environmentalists. Local histories, whether cultural, economic, or environmental, conditioned the responses of local communities and individuals to the prospect of the jetport. These grassroots stories make up an important part of the history of the early days of the entire environmentalist movement. As environmentalism became one branch of the broader set of social movements which included the civil rights, women's rights, and anti-war movements, this national scope obscured a great deal of this local variation. While national ideas about race, gender, class, and culture were fluid and shifting in the 60s and 70s, working class residents on the ground in the Pinelands held fast to their own

identities while still fighting an environmental battle. Opponents and supporters of the jetport were forced to take these identities into account as they advanced their positions.

To expand the scope of environmental history to include the narratives and voices of working class communities like those in the Pine Barrens, many historians have relied on the methodology of social history. I have chosen to employ the same methodology. Histories of conservationism and environmentalism, like historical narratives in many other disciplines, frequently concentrate on the beliefs and activities of individuals and organizations who have wielded immense economic or political power. As historical actors, politicians, corporations, government entities, and wealthy individuals tend to provide primary source material that is more copious, organized and easily accessible than those left behind by working class individuals. Even when environmental historians have sought to explore working class voices in the context of environmental controversies, they have often relied on the archives of organized unions, trade associations, and worker-focused non-governmental organizations. However, the Pine Barrens lacked the extensive extractive industries that tended to provoke labor activism, such as coal mining in Appalachia and the Mountain West, timber harvesting in the Pacific Northwest, or industrial-scale agriculture in Southern California. Without such organization, sources documenting working class feeling on the jetport are spread more diffusely.

Luckily, for a brief period in the late 1960s, the location of a fourth major airport to service New York City was the dominant political issue in New Jersey. Many observers credit Congressman William Cahill's adoption of a strong anti-jetport position

as the decisive factor in winning the 1969 New Jersey gubernatorial election. Because of the political visibility of the issue, accessing the beliefs and lived experiences of working class Pinelands residents was possible in a way that it might not have been on another issue. Families across southern New Jersey debated the jetport around dinner tables, sought to make themselves heard publicly through newspaper editorials and protests, and attempted to convince their federal, state, and local representatives to block the jetport. By combing through the archives of New Jersey politicians of the period, collecting newspapers reports on protests and hundreds of letters to editors, and conducting oral interviews with residents who recall the mood of the local communities during the late 1960s, I have been able to piece together a narrative of the opposition to the jetport that is about more than the success of environmentalists in protecting a unique ecosystem. Working class voices change our understanding of the land and its protection by incorporating it into the story of the local cultural climate.

This is a story that is rooted in the peculiarities of the environment and culture of southern New Jersey, but it is also connected to the larger history of American environmentalism. Grassroots environmental activism proliferated across the United States from the 1960s to the 1980s. Groups of motivated citizens fought pollution, protect local wildlife and scenic environment, and to generally assert their political authority of their own homes and lives. Each group did so for their own reasons, each understood their own “environmental threats in conjunction with and connected to other concerns.”¹²

¹² Cody Ferguson, *This is Our Land: Grassroots Environmentalism in the Late Twentieth-Century*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 15.

Without forgetting that local concerns and ideologies, and the strategies of resistance they inspired varied across time, geography, and culture, we can see a larger movement weaving its way through all of these stories. The activism of working class environmentalists is as much a part of this movement as the exploits of any organized environmental institution or government agency. This thesis seeks to reintegrate working class voices of the Pinelands into the environmental history of their surroundings, where they have always belonged.

Section I: Environmental Ideologies

In National Book Award-winning poet Gerald Stern's first major published work, *The Pineys*,¹³ the future poet laureate of New Jersey writes,

Southeast of Chatsworth, the Plains, the two islands
Of dwarf vegetation, like two little stricken hearts,
Still stand as they did in the beginning of the eighteenth century
Without any real change in growth or borders.
Only the threat of jetports and subdivisions,
Like dull music from the north, disturbs the order.

Stern couples this description of the Pine Plains as untouched and unchanging with an awareness of the region's history as a landscape marked by the pollution of

¹³ "Piney" is by far the most common term used to describe people who have generational family ties to the Pine Barrens. However, in this thesis I do not use the term unless I am directly quoting a source. I refrain from doing so for two reasons. First, "Piney" frequently carries with it a pejorative connotation, often used to imply backwardness, stupidity, or, depressingly often, incest. Secondly, even when used positively, the term is slippery. It is very hard to find someone willing to self-identify as a "Piney." "Pineyness" is defined in different ways: Generationally (usually at least 5 generations), geographically ("always a little deeper into the woods"), or to denote subsistence living ("working the cycle"). Because the term is so much trouble to use, I refer to people living in the Pinelands as locals or residents.

industrial resource extraction. He calls the Pinelands, “the old kingdom of charcoal and iron—the remnant/Of the ticket-men who grubbed like dogs for the rich/And lived in little black towns around the furnaces.”¹⁴ The dissonance between seeing the Pine Barrens as a natural wilderness and a post-industrial landscape is more than a poetic device. This ambiguity is vital to our knowledge of how those inside and outside the Pinelands comprehended the environment differently, and how these different impulses guided their approaches to the jetport development proposal.

Today, the Pine Barrens serves as a corrective to some of the negative assumptions that give New Jersey its less than sterling environmental reputation. While it is famously the most densely populated state, and contains among of the smallest acreages of federally protected wilderness (though more than some larger state like Ohio and Pennsylvania), thanks to the Pine Barrens New Jersey still contains some of the purest air and water, as well as some of the most biodiverse and undeveloped forested land in the Northeast. Though the 1.1-million-acre Pinelands National Reserve makes up more than a fifth of the land area of the entire state of New Jersey, it is home to less than a tenth of the state’s otherwise tightly packed population. Its sandy, acidic soil has always dissuaded permanent human settlement, though indigenous communities used the land for seasonal resource gathering. According to historian Neil Maher, it is “this ecological

¹⁴ Gerald Stern, “The Pineys,” *The Journal of the Rutgers University Library*, Vol. XXII, No. 2, (June 1969), 62, 64.

schizophrenia that makes New Jersey important for understanding the twentieth-century relationship between Americans and their natural world.”¹⁵

The idea that the Pine Barrens serves as a completely wild counterpart to the rest of the state is belied by the region’s pre-twentieth century history. Even though it is not difficult to find parts of the Pine Barrens that feel distant from industrial modernity, its status as a wilderness, it is, at best, ambiguous. It occupies a liminal space between wild and settled land. While less developed and sparsely populated than the rest of the state, it is not empty or pristine. In fact, almost none of the forested land in the Pine Barrens is old growth. Virtually all the vast forests encountered by the first European settlers were converted to the charcoal used to fuel the iron forges that dotted the area in the early nineteenth century. Today’s seemingly primeval forests are more accurately classified as post-industrial landscapes, having regrown when the iron industry moved west with the discovery of cheaper and more exploitable mineral deposits.¹⁶

With the end of widespread industry in the Pinelands, the area became devalued in the eyes of most New Jerseyans. Some of earliest maps made by European settlers had identified the Pine Barrens as a “Great Sand Desert,” and this sense of worthlessness and isolation once again dominated the popular image of the region. In the words of one northern New Jersey newspaper, the Pinelands were a “desolate, fire-swept country,” that, over time, “will revert more and more to worthless waste.”¹⁷ The region’s deficient

¹⁵ Neil Maher, “Introduction: Nature’s Next Exit? or Why New Jersey is as Important as Yellowstone National Park, in *New Jersey’s Environments: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Neil Maher (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 2.

¹⁶ Arthur D. Pierce, *Iron in the Pines: The Story of New Jersey’s Ghost Towns and Bog Iron*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1957), 5-6.

¹⁷ “New Jersey Waste Land,” *Elizabeth Journal*, August 28, 1938

environment was thought to produce a deficient population. After touring the interior of Burlington County in 1913, New Jersey Governor James Fielder found himself shocked at the condition of the locals. “Evidently these people are a serious menace to the State of New Jersey... They have inbred and led lawless and scandalous lives till they have become a race of imbeciles, criminals, and defectives.”¹⁸

By the time the jetport was proposed as a development scheme for the region in the early 1960s, though Governor Fielder’s eugenicist sentiments had fallen out of favor, negative views of the Pinelands environment (and sometimes people) persisted outside the region. They became one of the most common refrains in pro-jetport arguments. As soon as first jetport proposals were being made in 1960, the New Jersey Farm Bureau unanimously resolved that if the jetport needed to be built, “we urge that it be placed in the *nonproductive* pine barrens.”¹⁹ Even an article promoting nature tourism in the Pine Barrens took an oddly pessimistic tone about its own subject. “[U]nfortunately,” the article concluded, “the area’s beauty and interest will not appeal to the general taste. To most it will simply be a ‘gawd-forsaken wilderness.’”²⁰

The environmental ideology of jetport supporters privileged the need for continuous economic growth over the value of nonhuman nature. For M. Robert Paglee, an engineer with the Radio Corporation of America in Moorestown, New Jersey, efforts to stop the jetport were “a remarkable conservation hoax designed [to] kill economic

¹⁸ “Gov. Fielder Proposes to Segregate New Jersey’s Degenerate Pineys---Finds Them a Menace to State,” *New York Sun*, June 29, 1913

¹⁹ “Farmers Oppose Jetport Proposals,” *Plainfield Courier-News*, November 18, 1960.

²⁰ Fritz Cleary, “Barren Picturesque Region for Tour This Time of Year,” *Asbury Park Press*, May 12, 1968.

progress in a large portion of our state.” Any environmental concerns were irrelevant in comparison to growth. “Do you know, or have you even met,” he caustically asked U.S. Senator Harrison A. Williams, “someone who has taken the trouble to see a tree frog in the Pine Barrens?”²¹ Others, while milder in their rhetoric, confirmed the supremacy of economic thinking among jetport supporters. “Conservation is a very worthy endeavor,” one reader admitted to Pemberton, New Jersey’s tiny *Times-Advertiser* just days after the Armory meeting, but it “must complement sound progress, not seek to destroy it.” This writer, identifying themselves only as “Human Resources Conservationist,” thought the jetport’s economic merit was so obvious that they were compelled to rhetorically ask, “[c]an any thinking citizen interested in human progress believe that the first class commerce and industry which would accompany the proposed Pine Barrens Jetport could represent undesirable tax ratables?”²²

The ideology of economic growth embraced by jetport supporters carried with it a specific understanding of what the environment of the Pine Barrens meant. Any value held by the landscape was a function of its ability to support such growth. With the jetport the most visible proposal for regional development, the environment itself was enrolled in justifying the plan. “In the area serving New Jersey, Philadelphia, as well as New York City,” magazine publisher and former New Jersey state senator Malcolm Forbes editorialized in 1967, “there’s a huge, flat, sand-and-pine area near the Atlantic

²¹ M. Robert Paglee to Senator Harrison A. Williams, August 31, 1968, Harrison A. Williams Papers, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ, Box 538, Folder 8.

²² Human Resources Conservationist, Letter to the Editor, *Pemberton (N.J.) Times-Advertiser*, February 17, 1969.

Ocean in New Jersey's Burlington County. Few homes, little industry, and not too many prospects of more."²³ Some of the same characteristics that made environmentalists and locals desperate to protect the Pine Barrens, were seen by supporters as evidence that the landscape was an ideal jetport site. "Environmentally," pro-jetport Governor Richard J. Hughes claimed in 1963, in a way environmentalists would have found perverse, "Burlington is No. 1 [for the jetport]."²⁴

Using the environment of the Pinelands to argue *for* building the world's largest airport required highlighting only the space's physical features most favorable to aviation. A narrow selection of natural features come up repeatedly in supporter's arguments: flat topography, wilderness, large amounts of open space, clear skies, and a more trees than people. Absent from supporter's environmental are the endemic plants and animals, the titanic aquifers containing some of the cleanest water in the world, and, as much as possible, the people. A 1964 editorial cartoon in the jetport supporting *Asbury Park Press* titled "Say, That Flat Area Looks Like a Good Place to Land!" imagines a supersonic jet streaking back and forth over New Jersey looking a safe place to set down. The jet skips over four unwelcoming northern sites, depicted as too mountainous or swampy, before recognizing the potential of a large open space labelled "N.J. Pinelands" in tiny pine trees. The only thing thwarting the plane's successful landing is refusal of the Port Authority, which has cordoned off the site with barbed wire (See Figure 3).²⁵ The only natural features left of the Pinelands ecosystem are bunches of grass and a few

²³ Malcolm S. Forbes, Editorial, *Forbes Magazine*, May 1, 1967.

²⁴ Editorial, *Asbury Park Press*, July 15, 1963.

²⁵ Nelson, "Say, That Flat area looks Like a Good Place to Land!," *Asbury Park Press*, February 3, 1964.

scraggly pine trees. The landscape is reduced to its most basic characteristics; it is large, flat, and mostly empty.

Obviously, the environmentalist organizations fighting against the construction of the jetport had a very different understanding of the Pinelands environment and how it would be altered by development projects. For the groups, the wilderness of the Pine Barrens did not imply sterility or desolation.” Rather than a barren waste to be improved by industry, they were an unspoiled wilderness to preserved especially in cramped, polluted New Jersey. Robert Litch, Executive Secretary of the Federation of Conservationists, United Societies (FOCUS), one of the most vocal environmental groups in the jetport fight, the “Pinelands are the last remaining large open space in the east today; the only wilderness left in the state.”²⁶ Like other nature preservationists and environmentalists since the late nineteenth century, Litch understand that the idea of wilderness was a valuable tool both for setting environmental policy goals and for building the social, cultural, and political movements necessary to achieve those goals.²⁷

Environmentalists knew that wilderness in Pine Barrens did not imply emptiness or worthlessness because they were governed by an ecological, rather than an economic, ideology. For environmentalists ecological balance was the foundation on which economics rested. Roy Webber, an Episcopal priest and environmentalist from Toms River, noted that when U.S. Senator Harrison A. Williams, himself noncommittal on the jetport question, listed the factors to be considered at each potential jetport site, he “put

²⁶ Robert Litch, Letter to the Editor, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 15, 1968.

²⁷ James Morton Turner, *The Promise of Wilderness: American Environmental Politics Since 1964*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 85-90.

‘economic benefits’ first. This may be accidental,” he continued, “but it is so often put first I’m sure it will be the key pressure.” He continued by questioning the sense the economic ideology, asking, “in the long run, what economic benefits can there be if a proper and adequate water supply is not available.”²⁸

Environmentalists also defend the intrinsic value of the plants and wildlife of the Pine Barrens. This was the fundamental distinction between organized environmentalists and other groups active in the jetport controversy. They included other natural elements left out by jetport supporters; elements that were of somewhat less practical use to the human population of the state. The jetport needed to be opposed, Robert Litch and A. Jerome Walnut (another FOCUS leader) argued, because it would “destroy the home of countless varieties of fish, waterfowl, and animal life. More than 150 different wildflowers and 32 species of orchids live in the Pinelands. Many of these, such as Curly Grass Fern, are found nowhere else in the world.”²⁹

Environmentalists were adamant that their ecological ideology was the product of direct physical knowledge of the Pinelands and that the economic ideology of their opponents existed only in the absence of this knowledge. “To those who do not know the Pine Barrens and scurry by,” environmentalists Elsie Weisbrod opined in 1967, “it comes as a surprise that close-up they are not at all barren. Given a little time and a keen eye, you will discover flying squirrels, deer, raccoons, possums...and a jewel-like tree frog

²⁸ Roy L. Webber to Senator Harrison A. Williams, March 15, 1968, Harrison A. Williams Papers, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ, Box 538, Folder 6.

²⁹ A.J. Walnut and Robert B. Litch, Letter to the Editor, *Asbury Park Press*, March 31, 1967.

found nowhere else but here.”³⁰ Litch and Walnut’s reference to the curly-grass fern is especially instructive in this regard. The fern, discovered in the Pine Barrens in 1805, is unassuming to the point of near invisibility. Little more than an inch tall and resembling a curled blade of grass, it is virtually impossible to see from more than a foot off the ground. While an economically minded jetport supporter would be unlikely to find much to value in such species, environmentalists used it to explain what might be lost if the jetport were built.³¹

In historical accounts of the controversy, environmentally conscious opponents and economically driven supports are the critical groups to be considered. This “preservationists vs. despoilers” narrative has established the jetport battle as the first significant stirring of the environmental awareness and activism that would eventually lead to official federal and state protection of the Pinelands in 1979. In the words of ecologist Beryl Robichaud Collins, “[t]he jetport controversy had focused national attention on the protection of the Pine Barrens,” and led to “the emergence of strong local and statewide environmental interest groups, whose efforts would be needed in the next decade to ward off new threat to the Barrens.”³²

³⁰ Elsie E. Weisbrod, Letter to the Editor, *The Camden Courier-Post*, May 19, 1967.

³¹ Curly-grass fern, though first discovered near Quaker Bridge, deep in the heart of the southern New Jersey, was not, as Litch and Walnut suggested, endemic to the Pine Barrens. Though uncommon across its range, small communities of the plant can be also found in eastern Canada, New York, Delaware, and North Carolina. The same turned out to be true of the tree frog referenced by Elsie Weisbrod, isolated communities of which exist in North Carolina and Georgia.

³² Beryl Robichaud Collins, “The Backdrop for Pinelands Legislation,” in *Protecting the New Jersey Pinelands: A New Direction in Land-Use Management*, eds. Beryl Robichaud Collins and Emily W.B. Russell (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 44; For more on the role of the jetport fight in the formation and growth of environmentalist and conservationist groups in New Jersey, see also Robert J. Mason, *Contested Lands: Conflict and Compromise in New Jersey’s Pine Barrens*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 76-79; Goldstein, *Environmental Decision Making*, 71-79.

Missing from this account are the working-class Pinelands residents who rejected the purely economic ideology of jetport supporters while justifying their opposition in ways that were not always commensurate to the ecological ideology of organized environmentalists. Environmentalists were critically important to stopping the jetport and to the formal protection of the Pine Barrens in the late 1970s, but they would not have been enough on their own. Despite frequent claims to the contrary by proponents of the Ocean-Burlington site, the jetport was wildly unpopular in the area. Most contemporary Pinelands residents claimed that at least ninety percent of local population was opposed to the plan. Ocean County physician E. Charlotte Seasongood even claimed that she had never encountered a single jetport supporter in her day-to-day life, despite making a point of trying to solicit the opinions of everyone she encountered. Clearly, the jetport opposition was made up by more than a few well-organized upper- and middle- class environmental activists.³³

Pinelands residents opposed the jetport for a variety of reasons, and even as they exhibited their own ecological awareness, environmental concerns were often further from their minds than the standard narrative indicates. After 1969, when the Jetport Authority bill was defeated and anti-jetport politician William Cahill was elected Governor, the consensus on environmental concerns in the Pinelands immediately began to fracture. When informed that a 1970 state plan to purchase thousands of acres of Pine Barrens land for conservation would be the final nail in the jetport's coffin, Little Egg

³³ E. Charlotte Seasongood to Senator Harrison A. Williams, January 7, 1961, Harrison A. Williams Papers, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ, Box 538, Folder 7.

Harbor Township, New Jersey mayor Robert Leitz was pleased. “I’m glad to hear that,” he said, “That’s the last thing we’d ever need around here.” What this disdain for the jetport did not automatically translate into, however, was support for the state’s conservation efforts. Mayor Leitz wished to manage forest and watershed conservation on the municipal level to balance environmental concerns with the township’s base of tax ratables. Many other Pinelands residents and public officials also continued to oppose the jetport while emphasizing non-environmental concerns.³⁴

Like jetport supporters, Pinelands used the term, “environment” in a different way than environmentalists. However, instead of reducing the meaning of the environment to the features that justified industrial development, they had something more expansive in mind. For James Gardner Crowell, a retired radio parts shipping superintendent from Riverton, New Jersey, “environment” meant more than trees, water, plants, and wildlife. In a letter to U.S. Representative Frank Thompson in 1963, largely devoted to the logistical and transportation problems a Pinelands jetport would face, Crowell makes an argument for including the area’s human residents as a part of the regional ecology. “Any consideration of ‘environmental factors’ of the Burlington County area,” Crowell writes, “should include the feelings of the citizens of the county.”³⁵

Working-class Pinelands residents were far more likely to focus on the quality of life of those “citizens of the county,” than they were any ecological concerns. Warnings about noise pollution, traffic congestion, loss of recreational opportunities, and damage to

³⁴ “Pineland Purchase Plan Praised, Panned,” *Asbury Park Press*, August 19, 1970.

³⁵ James Gardner Crowell to Representative Frank Thompson, June 11, 1963, Harrison A. Williams Papers, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ, Box 538, Folder 6.

tourism vastly outnumber references to wildlife outside of a human context. It is next to impossible to find any Pine Barrens local using the word wilderness to refer to their region. It may have been termed “quiet,” “isolated,” or “peaceful,” but never wild. Working-class residents were far more likely to think about their land as a space of work and recreation than something that existed outside of their own lives. The Regular Republican Organization of Manchester, New Jersey summed up the feelings of most Pinelands residents when they publicly release a unanimous resolution laying out their reasons for opposing a jetport at any location in southern New Jersey. Such a project, they resolved, “would be a serious hazard to their health and living conditions caused by excessive noises, air pollution, and increased traffic hazards.”³⁶

In the years immediately following the initial jetport proposal, even those Pine Barrens residents most intimately familiar with the local environment were unlikely to make arguments against the jetport that mentioned the region’s ecological value. When the southern division of the New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen’s Clubs wrote to U.S. Representative (and future Governor) William Cahill to object to the jetport in 1960, this group of hunters and fishermen seemed more concerned with the future military implications of the jetport than they did with the damage it might do to wildlife. “If a Jet Base be placed anywhere in South Jersey,” they cautioned the Congressman it would be too close to our shore and in time of war the Federal Government may take possession of it. This would be asking for enemy submarines to launch missiles and an easy target to

³⁶ Edward J. Osterman to Senator Harrison A. Williams, undated, 1969, Harrison A. Williams Papers, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ, Box 538, Folder 7.

hit. Also small planes could be launched and passed over the base to attack our cities before our planes could leave the ground.” In the early 1960s, Cold War paranoia was on the minds of Pinelands residents in a way that the environmentalism of the late 1960s simply was not.³⁷

When the wildlife of the Pine Barrens was mentioned during locals’ objections to the jetport, it was unlikely to be the Pine Barrens Tree Frog or the curly-grass fern to which they referred. It was through hunting that many locals determined the value to be placed on local ecosystems. Game hunting for subsistence was so entrenched in Pinelands culture that harm to game population could not be separated from harm to the human population. “For the native [of the Pine Barrens],” sociologist Nora Rubinstein wrote, “who sees the land and its resources as an extension of self, the rejection of hunting is tantamount to a rejection of self.”³⁸ Deer were, by a wide margin, the animal most commonly cited by Pinelands residents when they discussed their fears of the jetport. Harry Sweet, a summer camp caretaker, (who the *Camden Courier-Post* thought to be an authentic local since he “live[d] with his wife and nine children in a house heated by a wood-burning stove”) was one of the rare locals to support the jetport only because he thought project could not do any more damage to deer populations than had already been done. “There ain’t much game around here anyway,” Sweet complained. “It’s been three years since I killed a deer.”³⁹ Instead of foregrounding economics or ecology, locals

³⁷ Edwin F. Cooper to Representative William Cahill, January 13, 1960, William T. Cahill Congressional Papers, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ, Box 46, Folder 28.

³⁸ Nora J. Rubinstein, “A Psycho-social Impact Analysis of Environmental Change in New Jersey’s Pine Barrens,” (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1983), 181.

³⁹ Pineland Residents Hot, Cold on Jetport, *The Camden-Courier Post*, January 21, 1960.

were practicing an ideology of anthropocentric conservationism, protecting their environment to ensure the continuation of their livelihoods and culture.

These three ideologies may have guided the responses of the individual and groups who held them, but they were not static. Over the course of the 1960s, the jetport controversy forced each group to adjust their arguments and tactics in response to the others. Environmentalists were quick to broaden their initial ecological ideology to include more human concerns. When FOCUS was founded in July, 1967, A. Jerome Walnut was clear about the organization's mission. "The object of this group is not to oppose the jetport, but to get a natural preserve created in the pines," he asserted. "The only reason we are opposing the jetport is because, according to the plan we have, it would be located right in the middle of the proposed preserve." Walnut went on to obliquely suggest expanding McGuire Air Force Base to accommodate commercial air traffic, a proposal that was as locally unpopular as levelling Penn State Forest to construct the jetport.⁴⁰ Little more than a year later, FOCUS officials were suggesting that their organization was far more diverse in both its interests and membership than their initial claims indicated. In a letter decrying the pro-jetport bent of a recently appointed state special committee, FOCUS president A. Morton Cooper positioned the group's base of support as widely as possible. "No one [on the jetport committee] represented the taxpayers of the area, nor the educators, sportsmen, scientists, hikers, canoers, campers, or even the very important cranberry and blueberry growers of the area." The task of representing the voices of these disparate interests had fallen on

⁴⁰ "Conservationists to Fight Jetport," *Asbury Park Press*, July 23, 1967.

FOCUS. It was a burden, Cooper indicated, that the group was more than happy to carry.⁴¹

This more expansive set of interests changed how FOCUS interacted with the working-class residents. When Cooper was called on to testify before the joint State Senate and Assembly hearings against the bill sanctioning the creation of an independent Jetport Authority, he linked his organization's goals to those of workers. Earlier in the day's testimony, Joel Jacobson, a representative of the United Automobile Workers union, made the familiar accusation that the assembled environmentalists, "apparently have more concern for the birds and the bees than they do for the human beings whose lives will be helped by jobs offered by such an airport." Cooper chose not to counterattack by accusing Jacobson of indifference toward nature, or even of defending an approach that might balance development and the environment. Instead, the environmentalist sought to remind the union leader of the common ground they shared. Arguing that the noise pollution of the jetport would be unacceptably high, Cooper invoked the example of earlier labor activism. "Labor unions," he argued, "have successfully fought against damage to the hearing and to the nervous systems of their constituents who are exposed to sound levels of 96 decibels in industry right here in New Jersey."⁴² By connecting the long-held union concern for the health and safety of their member's bodies with the environmentalist argument against the jetport, Cooper showed

⁴¹ A. Morton Cooper, Letter to the Editor, *Asbury Park Press*, August 9, 1968.

⁴² *Hearing before the Joint New Jersey Senate and Assembly Committees on Transportation and Public Utilities*, S.B. 377 and A.B. 433, Jetport Authority Bill, March 11, 1969, 38 A.

an awareness of the potential of working-class activism to work with, rather than against, his own cause.⁴³

After suburban northern New Jerseyans defeated a jetport proposal in Morris County's Great Swamp by having it designated as National Wildlife Refuge in 1960, jetport supporters began to understand the appeal of ecological arguments. The plans put forth by the Pinelands Regional Planning Board in 1964 and 1965 differed from earlier proposals by including so-called "conservation lands" as a buffer of green space between the main development zone and other communities. Supporters knew that fears of uncontrollable development animated every conceivable group involved in the jetport question, and pitched their proposal as the only way to protect any part of the Pinelands environment in the face of inevitable sprawl. "Conservationists will get more from the jetport," Ocean County politician George Makin chided environmentalists in 1967, "than any other type of development that will come someday if the jetport isn't put there."⁴⁴ Supporters learned to position themselves as conservationists. "We don't want to see all the open space disappear any more than does the most dedicated sportsman, conservationist, or just plain nature-lover," the *Ocean County Sun* editorialized in 1963. "But we do not believe the jetport would mean it would have to."⁴⁵ Environmentalists were aware of the danger of ceding this position to jetport supporters and worked to paint

⁴³ Labor unions themselves had a history of displaying their own awareness of the connection between the bodies of workers and the work environments in which they labored. This was true not only of the industrial workplaces referenced by Cooper, but in outdoor work environments such as mines and forests as well. See Loomis, *Empire of Timber*, 54-55; Montrie, *Making a Living*, 91-112.

⁴⁴ Makin Optimistic, Miller Pessimistic on a Jetport," *Asbury Park Press*, June 8, 1967.

⁴⁵ "Jetport: More Credit Than Debit," *Ocean County Sun*, February 21, 1963.

such concerns as opportunistic. “No one on the [state jetport special study] committee represented conservationists or belonged to conservation organization, although several professed to be conservationists” A. Morton Cooper complained. “But, many people make that claim – it is the ‘in-thing’ to do today.”⁴⁶

Working class Pinelands residents were just as aware of the growing importance of environmental thinking as jetport supporters. By 1968 and 1969, it became common to see locals following the lead of Craig Otto of Pennsauken, in southern New Jersey, in including concern for “the ecological balance of the area [which is] already threatened by the destructive practices of man.”⁴⁷ Joseph Portash, mayor of the small Pine Barrens community of Manchester, New Jersey, had gone from a firm jetport supporter as County Planner to a vociferous critic as mayor because of the feelings of his working-class and retiree constituents. Reflecting their changes in attitude toward thinking of the Pinelands as wild, Portash began referring to the region as “the last remaining Shangri-La in the State of New Jersey,” and using such preservationist phrases as “unspoiled,” and “sublime” calling it “one of the last few utopias left.”⁴⁸ If the ecological ideology of environmentalists meant stopping the jetport, working-class Pinelands residents proved more than amenable to incorporating it into their own worldview.

Thinking of the jetport controversy as a milestone in the history of New Jersey environmentalism is both true and misleading. It is undeniably true that without the threat

⁴⁶ A. Morton Cooper, Letter to the Editor, *Asbury Park Press*, August 9, 1968.

⁴⁷ Craig A. Otto to Senator Harrison A. Williams, August 2, 1969, Harrison A. Williams Papers, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ, Box 538, Folder 8.

⁴⁸ *Hearing before the Joint New Jersey Senate and Assembly Committees on Transportation and Public Utilities*, S.B. 377 and A.B. 433, Jetport Authority Bill, March 11, 1969, 19.

of the jetport, environmentalists may not have been galvanized in the late 1960s and John McPhee's gloomy prediction that "it would appear that the Pine Barrens are not very likely to be the subject of dramatic decrees or acts of legislation. They seem to be headed slowly toward extinction," may have come to pass.⁴⁹ However, even within the environmental context, we have seen a complex set of ideologies were operating and interacting during the 1960s. In the rest of this thesis we will see that non-environmental concerns can add even more complexity to our understanding of the jetport's meaning. Working class Pine Barrens residents, even those deadest against the jetport, could understand the position of Fred Brown, the Hog Wallow, New Jersey native made famous by John McPhee in *The Pine Barrens*. The Jetport, Brown conceded, "would be the end of these woods. But," he countered, "there'd be people here you could do business with."⁵⁰

Section II: Spheres of Political Authority

In late August, 1961, an organization was formed calling itself the Citizen's Committee for a Pine Barrens Jetport. The Committee members laid out a bold plan to hire public relations firms to target the public and government officials with a "heavy barrage of information" about the physical and economic desirability of building a jetport on the Pine Plains. The organization wasted little time in entering the political arena. Its first public act was to grant honorary membership to both candidates in New Jersey's

⁴⁹ John McPhee, *The Pine Barrens*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1968), 156.

⁵⁰ McPhee, *The Pine Barrens*, 13.

upcoming gubernatorial election. Within a week, the Committee's vice chairman had met with members of the Pinelands Regional Planning Board and announced the jetport was headed toward a quick approval.⁵¹

The Citizen's Committee quickly faded from memory. Other than the small flurry of press coverage following its initial creation, there is no subsequent record of the group's activity. However, though its contribution to the jetport controversy was slight, a closer look at the group reveals how the regional politics of New Jersey influenced different historical actor's positions on the jetport. Publicly, the Committee took the "citizen's" part of its name very seriously. Newspaper accounts of its formation specifically referred to it as a "Pinelands group," and one supporter stressed that it would focus on the economic effect of the jetport on Ocean and Burlington Counties, rather than the entire state of New Jersey. In practice, a less local orientation animated its work. Of more than a dozen Committee members listed, none hailed from the Pinelands. Only two lived in southern New Jersey at all, and they were from the urban centers of Camden and Atlantic City, respectively. The rest represented industrial or business interests in northern counties, with the city of Newark providing three times as many members as Ocean and Burlington Counties combined.

If any single factor inspired working class Pinelands locals to oppose the jetport, it was the idea that the Pine Barrens was an ideal construction site because it lacked public opposition. Just as suburban northern New Jerseyans felt ignored by the alleged

⁵¹ "Pinelands Group to Push for Jetport," *Asbury Park Press*, August 28, 1961; "Jetport Group Honors Both Top Candidates," *Red Bank Register*, August 22, 1968.

pro-New York bias of the Port Authority, southern New Jerseyans felt similarly minimized by what they saw as the hypocrisy of those same wealthy communities pushing the jetport on the Pinelands. “Why are the people in this area less important than those in Morris County,” asked E. Charlotte Seasongood, “where a jetport was considered too undesirable for the safety of those in that county?”⁵² James Gardner Crowell took inspiration from the success of those same Morris County protestors, but needed to reassert the existence of local opposition to the jetport in the Pinelands. “The vast majority of our citizens are vigorously opposed to having the proposed jetport, which the citizens of Morris County were successful in resisting, foisted upon them,” Crowell wrote to his Congressman in 1963. “We resent the efforts of a few persons in government to spread the completely erroneous impression that ‘the people down there’ are for it.”⁵³

Pinelands residents were not wrong in thinking that their opposition to the jetport was frequently ignored. Because a handful of local politicians in the Ocean and Burlington County legislatures and planning boards had shown interest in the project, newspaper accounts of the issue in the early 60s portrayed the Pine Barrens as desperately in favor of the jetport. “Other Jersey Areas Resist Jetport, but Pinelands Beggars for It” blared a headline in the *Asbury Park Press*, above a mocked-up photo of a large jetliner coming in for a landing on a drawn runway superimposed on a photo of a barely discernable pine forest. The article catalogued the difficulties these officials would face

⁵² E. Charlotte Seasongood to Senator Harrison A. Williams, January 7, 1961, Harrison A. Williams Papers, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ, Box 538, Folder 7.

⁵³ James Gardner Crowell to Representative Frank Thompson, June 11, 1963, Harrison A. Williams Papers, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ, Box 538, Folder 6.

in moving construction forward, but the opposition of working class locals or environmentalists was not one of them. More important were the positions of the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) and the Port Authority, both of which had dismissed the Pinelands as too far from New York City to serve as a jetport location.⁵⁴ These local officials were themselves anxious to downplay any hint of local opposition. Writing to William Cahill in 1960, Burlington County's Director of Economic Development and PRPB member George Rogers reported that he was pleased to announce that in the central Pine Barrens municipality of Woodland Township, "community acceptance of the [jetport] idea was unanimous and that they pledge 100% cooperation in the future."⁵⁵ This would have come as a surprise to the residents of Chatsworth, the unincorporated community within Woodland Township sometime called the "Capital of the Pines," and the closet thing the Pine Barrens had to a social hub. Two months after Rogers reported the unanimous support of the town, Chatsworth locals told a reporter for the *Mount Holly Herald* that Buzby's General Store on Main Street was the site of heated nightly debates about the jetport, and that a consensus on the topic was never reached.⁵⁶

As the opposition to the jetport proposal picked up steam in the late 1960s, its political influence quickly grew. In 1967, Ocean County Freeholder (County Legislator) George Makin thought the jetport was an inevitability. "When the jetport is built, where common sense dictates" he argued, "it should be built and it will be built in the

⁵⁴ Ed Reiter, "'Other Jersey Areas Resist Jetport, but Pinelands Begs for It,'" *Asbury Park Press*, November 22, 1964.

⁵⁵ George Rogers to Representative William Cahill, January 5, 1960, William T. Cahill Papers, Rutgers University Library, Box 46, Folder 27.

⁵⁶ "Chatsworth Debates Its Future As Jetport Metropolis," *Mount Holly* (N.J.) *Herald*, March 10, 1960.

Pinelands.”⁵⁷ Two years later, Makin was scathingly attacking the Jetport Authority bill that would have facilitated a Pinelands jetport. He was even forced to try to minimize his earlier support, which had become a very sudden political liability, with one opponent claiming that Makin “did not consider the peace, tranquility, and safety of our citizens or the damage that would be done to our natural and economic resources.”⁵⁸ Makin’s political career survived but only because his new anti-jetport position was strong enough to match that of his constituents. According to John Kennell, the Secretary of a local taxpayer’s association, local politicians like Makin and Joseph Portash were taking the only positions their voters would allow. “A safe guess would put the number of people in Ocean County opposed to the jetport in the 90% bracket,” Kennell explained. “Whereas our local newspaper and our local Chamber of Commerce know where the money is, the Ocean County officials and legislators know where the votes are.”⁵⁹

But the jetport was more than just a local issue. The path to resolving the controversy ran directly through the fault lines of New Jersey’s chaotic regional politics. As we have seen, attempts to build the jetport in northern New Jersey, where FAA and Port Authority had desired it, had failed in the face of strident local opposition. Some in northern New Jersey saw the Pinelands as an acceptable sacrifice zone to ensure that their own backyards would remain jetport free. In explaining his rationale for pressuring Governor Richard Hughes to move forward with the Pinelands jetport site, state assemblyman Joseph Maraziti of Morris County was crystal clear about this. “The only

⁵⁷ “Pineland Jetport Seen Inevitable,” *Asbury Park Press*, April 7, 1967.

⁵⁸ “Democrats Query GOP on Jetport,” *Asbury Park Press*, October 29, 1969.

⁵⁹ John G. Kennell, Letter to the Editor, *Asbury Park Press*, February 17, 1969.

way we can be sure there will be no jetport on the Great Swamp or Solberg [another proposed northern New Jersey site],” Maraziti warned his constituents, “is to provide for the location of the airport in another area.”⁶⁰

Of course, Pinelands residents were obvious cross about the notion that sacrificing their quality of life to suit the needs of northern suburbanites could be justified. They made numerous references to how this violated their ideas of proper political reciprocity. Most saw it as simply hypocrisy. As a Mr. and Mrs. M. Shomer of Toms River wrote, “[i]t seems to us that the very reasons given by the officials in North Jersey for the undesirability of placing the jetport in their areas more than applies to us.”⁶¹ Others were quick to sinister political machinations in northern attempts to impose a jetport on unwilling Pinelands communities. “I was under the impression that discrimination meant black against white, but realize that it is not so,” wrote Andrew K. Burd of Bayville, in southern New Jersey. “It is North Jersey affluent against South Jersey minorities, rich Northern politicians against no so rich Southern.”⁶²

In seeking to defend themselves against the jetport, Pinelands locals conceived of their opposition as the assertion of their rights as citizens, at least as much as they did as a defense of the environment of the Pine Barrens. In a small cartoon appearing in the *Asbury Park Press* in 1969, opposition to the jetport was depicted as the New Jersey public standing up to a too powerful special interest. Even though the cartoonist, Bill

⁶⁰ “Urges Use of Barrens for Jetport,” *Courier-News* (Bridgewater, N.J.), June 27, 1967.

⁶¹ M. Shomer to Senator Harrison A. Williams, February 17, 1969, Harrison A. Williams Papers, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ, Box 538, Folder 8.

⁶² Andrew K. Burd to Senator Harrison A. Williams, March 15, 1969, Harrison A. Williams Papers, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ, Box 538, Folder 8.

King, was an erstwhile jetport supporter, his untitled cartoon featured an imposing and angry figure labelled “PUBLIC” glaring threateningly at a man labelled “JETPORT.” Another figure, scarred and representing racetrack lobby, recently defeated in a public referendum, warns the jetport stand-in not to mess with the public.⁶³ (See Figure 4) In standing up to the hypocrisy of northern politicians and the money and power of special interests (though those interests are only nebulously defined), working class Pinelands residents sought to assert their equal political rights as American citizens. Writing in opposition to the Jetport Authority bill, Ella and Harold Fields of Toms River conveyed their position in the most broadly patriotic terms. “Such a [jetport] authority would,” they argued, “supersede government of the people, by the people, and for the people. It would be relinquishment of control by the state and its people to such authority.”⁶⁴

It is crucial to remember the precise local political context of the jetport controversy because it highlights how working class residents and organized environmentalists agreed and disagreed on political questions. When it came to state politics, environmentalists were more than willing to engage in the same sort of appeals to local autonomy and rights of political representation. FOCUS Executive Secretary Robert Litch stressed perceived northern hypocrisy in precisely the same way that many locals in the Pinelands did. “Many of these gentlemen are from northern New Jersey already committed to preserving inviolate the peace and quiet of their homes,” Litch wrote in a letter to the editor about the New Jersey Citizen’s Transportation Council,

⁶³ Bill King, “Untitled,” *Asbury Park Press*, February 2, 1969.

⁶⁴ Ella and Harry Fields to Senator Harrison A. Williams, February 1, 1969, Harrison A. Williams Papers, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ, Box 538, Folder 8.

another northern group pressing for a jetport in the Pine Barrens. “What better place would there be [for them] for a jetport than in the Pine Barrens, one of the last large open space areas in the East?”⁶⁵ Environmentalists were especially fond of arguments focusing on reciprocity and equality, stressing their opposition to a jetport at any site in New Jersey. One month earlier Litch had promised: “FOCUS never has, nor ever will, attempt to shove off on any other community a jetport which we do not want in our own backyard.”⁶⁶ When the political interests of environmentalists and working class residents converged, it is easy to see why the efforts of locals have been treated as something akin to a subset of environmentalist activism.

However, these political interests did not always converge so seamlessly. The most glaring divide between the two groups concerned the role of the federal government. In contrast to the local or regional concerns of Pinelands residents, organized environmentalists were uniformly and wholeheartedly in favor of the federal government protecting the Pinelands in the form of a national park, preserve, or recreation area. Though FOCUS’ had evolved from the days when creating a preserve was their sole political aim, they never gave up on this goal. Pressure from groups like FOCUS and the New Jersey Audubon Society had forced the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct studies on the feasibility of federal protection for the Pinelands in 1967. For environmentalists, preservation as part of the NPS was the only sure path forward for the region. “Conservationists await word from the National Park Service about making

⁶⁵ Robert B. Litch, Letter to the Editor, *Asbury Park Press*, January 21, 1968.

⁶⁶ Robert B. Litch, Letter to the Editor, *Asbury Park Press*, December 15, 1967.

this area into a ‘New Jersey Pine Barrens National Monument,’” environmentalist Elsie Weisbrod wrote in 1967. “This would integrate all the forests here into one whole and insure their preservation. This natural area is necessary to our welfare and too precious to be bulldozed under for a jetport.”⁶⁷ While the Department of the Interior ultimately thought preservation as a park or preserve would prove too locally complicated to be a workable solution, environmentalists would hold onto this hope throughout the 1970s.

The response of Pinelands residents to the proposal was something else entirely. Conservative southern New Jerseyans feared giving up any local autonomy to the federal government. While they were anxious about the potential destructive power of mass industrialization, they wanted to hold onto their lower-impact uses of the land. In 1969, the New Jersey Farm Bureau, acting on behalf of Pinelands cranberry growers, publically called for a halt to any national park studies, “until such time that the leaders of this proposal (conservationists) can meet with all agricultural interests and determine the impact on all segments of New Jersey agriculture,” and until all agricultural objections are “satisfactorily met and resolved.”⁶⁸ While most working class Pinelands residents never considered the jetport preferable to national park status, they were vocal about their desire for local autonomy. Public hearings on the NPS plans devolved into some of the most confrontational events of the entire jetport saga, with angry locals shouting, “this is a home rule state!” “keep the Feds out!” and “we want to run our own show!”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Elsie E. Weisbrod, Letter to the Editor, *The Camden Courier-Post*, May 19, 1967.

⁶⁸ Earl Josephson, “N.J. Farmers Upset by Park, Not Jetport,” *Trenton Evening Times*, January 31, 1969.

⁶⁹ Beryl Robichaud Collins, “The Backdrop for Pinelands Legislation,” in Collins and Russell, 42.

The political ideals and calculations of each group involved in the jetport controversy governed the way they positioned their goals. But the jetport controversy went beyond the regular push and pull of New Jersey politics. As they engaged in political activism, supporters and opponents of the jetport were simultaneously creating and enforcing their racial, cultural, economic, and personal identities. These identities are key to understanding why the activism of each of these groups presented itself in such starkly different ways.

Section III: Social Identities and Strategies of Resistance

Just before Thanksgiving, 1959, a batch of cranberries harvested in the Pacific Northwest tested positive for the carcinogenic herbicide aminotriazole. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare responded by temporarily condemning the nation's cranberry crop and warning consumers to avoid them creating America's first modern food scare. Cranberry sales plummeted and the Pine Barrens, where cranberry growing had been the dominant industry since the late-nineteenth century, was especially hard hit. Some were willing to consider the possibility that the economic damage could be ameliorated by the recent proposal to build a supersonic jet terminal in the middle of those now much less valuable cranberry bogs. John Bowker, a laborer and future mayor of Woodland Township, New Jersey, thought the jetport was compatible with his understanding of the identity of the rural township's citizens. "Hell," Bowker told a reporter in 1960, "I know there are people who like to look at flowers- but believe me they don't live here by a long ways! They've got it made up in some nice big house in

town. They don't work here either, tyrin' to scratch out a living all year 'round!"

Bowker's support for the jetport was tied to his personal identity as a member of the working class.⁷⁰

The caricature of the nature-lover as affluent, effete, and disconnected from the concerns of working class Americans had deep cultural resonance, dating back to the earliest days of conservation in the nineteenth century. This stereotype attached itself to environmentalism in the 1960s and has remained a problem for environmental activists ever since. According to political scientist Timothy W. Luke, the environmentalist of the 1960s and 70s "allegedly was a white, wine-and-brie, upper-middle-class professional (who probably once was a hippie or anti-war activist) with no sympathy for the plight of the ordinary working man put out of work by environmentalist's meddlesome 'tree-hugging' love of Nature (which meant clean water, clean air, and clean beaches around upper-middle-class enclaves of wealth).⁷¹ Much has been written about the cultural and political conflicts between environmentalists and the working class. Less well explored are the ways that conservative, working class identities were created and employed in the service of environmentalist causes. The jetport opposition, with its large base of working class support, is an ideal vehicle for exploring the ways in which unexpected political, cultural, economic, gender, and racial identities were a vital part of strategies of local environmentalists in the 1960s.

⁷⁰ "Chatsworth Debates Its Future As Jetport Metropolis," *Mount Holly* (N.J.) *Herald*, March 10, 1960.

⁷¹ Timothy W. Luke, *Ecocritique: Contesting the Politics of Nature, Economy and Culture*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 49-50.

Politically, the Pine Barrens have always been more conservative than the rest of New Jersey. It is not a coincidence that citizens in the Pinelands and Roosevelt engaged in such different strategies of resistance against the jetport. These differences were the product of the profoundly dissimilar regional and cultural contexts from which they emerged. The borough of Roosevelt had long been an enclave for left-wing artists and writers, including its most famous resident, the social realist painter Ben Shahn. Founded as Jersey Homesteads in 1936 by the New Deal's Resettlement Administration, Roosevelt was originally conceived as a utopian cooperative village for Jewish garment workers from New York City. Known as "Jewtown," or "that place where all the communists are," to neighboring communities, Roosevelt had social activism practically coded into its communal DNA.⁷²

The countercultural resistance tactics of the Roosevelt jetport protestors were never going to become widespread in the Pinelands. The region's shared political identity would not allow for it. Editorials in southern New Jersey newspapers denouncing the jetport, consistently shared space with editorials condemning social activism, especially student protests on college campuses. When the tiny *Pemberton Times-Advertiser* even found fault in the completely non-violent demonstration of Roosevelt residents because some had chosen to bring children to their quiet picket line in Trenton. "[T]o hang a sign around a child's neck or place it in his hand as a publicity stunt," an unsigned editorial

⁷² For more on the history of Roosevelt, New Jersey, see Edwin Roskam, *Roosevelt, New Jersey: Big Dreams in a Small Town and What Time Did to Them*, (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1972); *Roosevelt, New Jersey: Visions of Utopia*, directed by Richard Kroehling (Lumen Productions, 1983), VHS (Cinema Guild, 1983).

scolded, “is to degrade the issue at hand.”⁷³ Conservative Pinelands residents were more likely to embrace the low-key style of resistance of Ocean County Freeholder Robert Miller. Miller, another of the many local politicians who had gone from jetport advocate to strident critic due to constituent pressure, urged letter-writing campaigns to sway the state’s congressional delegation, thinking that a more effective strategy than setting up a march on Trenton, “and getting people hysterical.”⁷⁴ Pine Barrens residents were more likely to act like J. Garfield Demarco, the cranberry grower and local political heavyweight who the *Philadelphia Inquirer* said not would rely on “tears and poetry” to save the Pinelands. Instead, Demarco promised to “do some arm twisting when necessary, dig in for the big fight if the jetport plan ever pops up again.”⁷⁵

Those Pinelands residents who continued to support the jetport into the late 1960s knew that conservative impulses in southern New Jersey made the counterculture unpopular. While the environmentalist movement and the broader counterculture of the late 1960s were different groups, jetport supporters actively conflated them. One particularly agitated jetport supporter made this connection explicit and used it to assert jetport supporters own self-image as reasonable, practical, and politically stable. “The average person (referring to Jetport opponents) will condemn the hippie and his rebellion against the establishment, and then think just like him,” William F. Gordon of Toms River warned. “My contention is that we do away with hippies and hypocrites, and elect

⁷³ “Pint-Sized Demonstrators,” *Pemberton* (N.J.) *Times-Advertiser*, May 7, 1969.

⁷⁴ “County Endorses Study of Red Tide, Rejects Idea of Jetport Protest,” *Asbury Park Press*, April 3, 1969.

⁷⁵ Carl M. Sardella, “Saving Pinelands Needs More Than Poetry and Tears,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 11, 1972.

those public officials who will give the people of this great country logical foresight and sound decision, whether it be the placement of a jetport or a borough street.”⁷⁶ The appeal of “logical foresight” was not lost on jetport opponents like William Garhes, a former coal miner and canvas maker in Barnegat, New Jersey who ran for Congress in a special election to replace newly elected Governor William Cahill. Gahres, though a protest candidate out to “make waves,” positioned his opposition to the jetport as bog-standard conservative Republican “common-sense;” the only possible position for a politician with “no allegiance to anyone other than the voters.”⁷⁷

In addition to asserting a pragmatic and conservative political identity opposing the jetport, Pinelands residents stressed their economic class as a part of their resistance. Contrary to John Bowker’s class conscious dismissal of nature-lovers, many locals saw preserving the Pine Barrens as a means of ensuring access to natural recreation to the less wealthy. “The jetport decision should be made by the many ‘ordinary citizens’ whose lives are tied to this region,” radio installer Lawrence Corn of Mount Holly declared in 1967, “the little guy whose recreational realm will never include the grandeur of our Western national parks or a Caribbean retreat. Let him decide whether he wants to live a beehive type of existence in a sea of industrial or apartment complexes, or whether he would like to do a little hunting, fishing, swimming, or just walking through our last reservoir of clean air and water – the New Jersey Pinelands!”⁷⁸ Locals connected the possibility of the jetport to historical examples of wealthy outsiders seeking to exploit the

⁷⁶ William F. Gordon, Letter to the Editor, *Asbury Park Press*, August 23, 1968.

⁷⁷ “Barefoot Canvas Maker In Race to ‘Make Waves,’” *Asbury Park Press*, February 17, 1970.

⁷⁸ Lawrence R. Corn, Letter to the Editor, *Camden Courier-Post*, March 31, 1967.

natural resources of the Pine Barrens for their own profit. Most notably, industrialist Joseph Wharton had bought over 100,000 acres in the Pinelands with the goal of exporting its water to Philadelphia, inadvertently sparing the land from development after the state legislature blocked the plan. A. Morton Cooper of FOCUS connected this history with the jetport development, telling the committee considering the Jetport Authority bill he hoped they would show the same courage as their predecessors had in the 1870s, and protect the Pinelands' water supply from "certain destruction in the interest of the international jetset and a few real estate operators and Chambers of Commerce."⁷⁹ One Pinelands local, identifying himself as "Just a Jersey Pine Baron," using a common local nickname for powerful landowners and industrialists of the nineteenth century. He had adopted the Pine Baron title used it to assert control of the pines to local individuals.⁸⁰

Distrust of outside political authority ran deep in southern New Jersey. Pine Barrens natives were famous for their desire to be left alone to pursue their own livelihoods. According to former Pemberton, New Jersey town council member Michael Tamn, it could be next to impossible to get a conservative Pinelands resident to involve even local government authorities in what they considered their personal business. Tamn recalled the story of George "Topsy" Taylor, one of the few people he thought unequivocally met the requirements to be considered a "Piney." Taylor, a small cranberry grower and manual laborer for Burlington County, once fed his dogs from food scraps he

⁷⁹ *Hearing before the Joint New Jersey Senate and Assembly Committees on Transportation and Public Utilities*, S.B. 377 and A.B. 433, Jetport Authority Bill, March 11, 1969, 36-37 A.

⁸⁰ Just a Jersey Pine Baron, Letter to the Editor, *Camden Courier-Post*, March 22, 1960.

collected while working at the Burlington County Insane Asylum. After the dogs developed tumors, Taylor began to suspect that patients at the asylum may have been using the food to discard their unwanted medication. When Tamn suggested that he invite the County to investigate the effects of the medication, Taylor demurred, arguing that “it would be a hell of a nuisance” since too many questions would be asked. Even risks to local health and safety could not always overcome residents’ fears of outside authority.⁸¹

Responses to the jetport also show that jetport opponents were attuned to how their positions could be gendered. Many of the local efforts against the jetport were spearheaded by women. This was common among grassroots environmentalist activist groups across the United States in the 60s and 70s. As historian James Longhurst writes in his history of local anti-pollution activism, *Citizen Environmentalists*, “many mixed-gender groups...featured prominent female leaders, enjoyed implicit connections with women’s social networks, were based on the organizational skills of women, and used rhetorical allusions to maternal care for the natural world.”⁸² This was true among environmentalist groups fighting the jetport, where Dorothy Evert was the spokesperson for the Pine Barrens Conservationists, and working class groups like the local AARP chapters organized in protest by Cynthia Vollmer. However, in a time when newspaper accounts of their activities unvaryingly identified them as Mrs. Brooks Evert and Mrs. Jacob Vollmer respectively, jetport opponents tended to push back on any feminine connotations associated with movement. The very first thing that A. Morton Cooper did

⁸¹ Michael A. Tamn, interview with author, Southampton Township, NJ, March 6, 2017.

⁸² James Longhurst, *Citizen Environmentalists*, (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2010), 74-75.

when testifying against the jetport was to assure his audience that, “we are not a bunch of flower-picking old ladies.” Cooper stressed that his sort of environmental group included such masculine pursuits as “hunting and fishing, as represented by the New Jersey Federation of Sportsmen’s Clubs.” Cooper may have been attempting to express that FOCUS was also supported by non-environmentalists, but chose to do so in an explicitly gendered manner.⁸³ Opponents were consistent in their use of gendered terms like “sportsman,” “outdoorsman,” and what was implied to be male recreation like hunting and fishing, only rarely employing metaphors of nurturing or motherhood to defend their pursuits.

While organized environmentalists were sensitive to the risk of being labelled feminine, working class Pinelands residents were carving out social identities through their activism that carried racial overtones. The Pinelands in the late 1960s were overwhelmingly white, and remain so today. Apart from small African-American enclaves, the most contact a white Pinelands resident was likely to have with a non-white person was seeing African-American day laborers from Philadelphia and Camden working in cranberry bogs or blueberry fields. This absence only heightens the racial contexts of some complaints locals had about the jetport. The retiree communities that provided the bulk of the Armory meeting attendance, constantly took the time to justify their flight from the urban decay of New York and northern New Jersey. They repeatedly told each of their politicians that they had chosen to escape from the pollution, noise, and

⁸³ *Hearing before the Joint New Jersey Senate and Assembly Committees on Transportation and Public Utilities*, S.B. 377 and A.B. 433, Jetport Authority Bill, March 11, 1969, 33 A.

crime of the cities to enjoy the peace and quiet of the Pinelands. Sometimes this desire manifested itself as a general disdain for an influx of “unknown” people. The idea of an *international* jetport was especially troubling to some in this respect. According to Henry and Helen Moon of Forked River, New Jersey, the jetport would convert the Pinelands “into a vast polluted cesspool, befouled forever by unwanted industry, by the influx of hundreds of thousands of new families...For what? To satisfy the selfish ideas of the millions of travelling outsiders who would be dumped here regularly – who do not pay taxes here, and who could not care less what happens to our beautiful, clean, and uncrowded garden spot?”⁸⁴

Though racial fears were never more than implicit in such complaints, the divide between the urban and the rural in them is sometimes difficult to read in any other way. Pinelands residents took a great deal of pride in the fact that they could say that they were opposed to building the jetport anywhere else in New Jersey. They saw this as avoiding the hypocritical NIMBYism of northern suburbanites. However, on the rare occasion that someone from southern New Jersey suggested building the jetport elsewhere, rural identity started to meld with racial identity. One Lakewood, New Jersey resident thought that the next time the Pinelands jetport was suggested, locals should fire back by proposing Harlem as a jetport site. “The location is just a few miles from Times Square...and the land is completely unproductive,” argued E.J. Toner, before turning his sights on Harlem residents. “The tenants keep reducing the apartments to rubble, and the

⁸⁴ Henry and Helen Moon to Senator Harrison A. Williams, February 15, 1969, Harrison A. Williams Papers, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ, Box 538, Folder 8.

landlords say they are going bankrupt, so no resident will miss the place,” he continued. “There would be...dramatic savings in such areas as fire protection and embezzlement...No more welfare with all that work around, right?”⁸⁵ This sort of racialized thinking helps us understand why the direct action protests associated with the civil rights movement never took off when the white, rural, conservative Pinelands were faced with the prospect of the jetport.

Conclusion: Local Nature, Local Resistance

Writing the history of a grassroots social movement involves walking a thin line. On the one hand, if that local movement is not connected to broader, national themes, it risks becoming a quirky historical curiosity, of little interest to anyone without a direct geographical or emotional connection to the area. On the other hand, analyzing that same social movement as merely an example of a larger national trend runs the risk of erasing all the distinct local context that inevitably exists when local people engage in local politics. This thesis has endeavored to tell a local story with its local context intact, while shedding light on how this one controversy can help us understand the larger history of American environmentalism in the late 1960s.

The demonstrators from Roosevelt and the working class citizens of the Pinelands were fighting against the same jetport project, but they did so in vastly different ways. In the press release issued by the Roosevelt-based Citizen’s Committee Against the Jetport in Central New Jersey before their march in Trenton the group laid out a bold vision for

⁸⁵ E.J. Toner, Letter to the Editor, *Asbury Park Press*, February 16, 1969.

its future. “The demonstration,” the anticipated, “will kick off a major campaign to combine citizens of all affected communities throughout portions of Monmouth, Ocean, and Mercer Counties all the way from Princeton to Asbury Park.”⁸⁶ They saw their battle as inherently connected to other similar battles being fought across New Jersey. When Roosevelt protestors found themselves face to face with wealthier northern communities protesting similar proposals in their own Counties, they did not respond with anger. They chose instead to carry signs saying “We will sign your petitions if you will sign out petitions.”⁸⁷

The jetport opposition that developed in the Pine Barrens never shared this wish to incorporate other communities in their protest. They never went out of their way to form alliances outside of southern New Jersey. Environmental organizations active in the Pinelands were the only ones likely to think on a national level. At the same time that hopes for a Pinelands jetport were dying in the late 60s and early 70s, the federal government was studying the possibility of constructing its own massive supersonic jet airport in what is now the Big Cypress National Preserve next to Everglades National Park in southern Florida. This plan became a national cause among environmentalists in a way the Pinelands jetport never did. As the offices of the state’s Senators and Representatives were flooded with objections to jetports in New Jersey, they also received complaints about the Everglades Jetport. However, the source of these

⁸⁶ Press Release of the Citizen’s Committee Against the Jetport in Central New Jersey, March 4, 1969, Borough of Roosevelt Historical Collection, Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ, Box 15, Folder 10.

⁸⁷ “Marchers at Trenton Protest Jetport Site,” *Camden Courier-Post*, April 8, 1969.

complaints is illustrative of how cultural attitudes informed political ones. Groups like FOCUS, the New Jersey Audubon Society, and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation made their objections to the Florida project very clear. The working-class residents of southern New Jersey on the other hand, the same people who threatened, cajoled, implored, and protested the destruction of the Pinelands, were notably silent. They sought to protect their homes and their local history and culture; these things would not be damaged by bulldozers in the swamps of a different state.

It is tempting for environmental historians exploring the jetport controversy to understand it as an example of the growing power of environmentalism in late 1960s America. Superficially, this makes perfect sense. The most visible and vocal members of the opposition were the environmental groups that worked tirelessly to protect a critically endangered ecosystem from what, at least for a time, seemed to inevitable destruction. But this triumphal narrative has a pernicious side effect: sidelining the voices of the working class residents of the Pinelands, who, though not as organized or vocal, were more numerous and just as committed. This dimension of the conflict has been lost and now, hopefully, is starting to be recovered.

Meanwhile, this local event must be integrated into our understanding of social, cultural, and political history of the era in which it occurred. The jetport controversy took place in a nation where an environmental movement was gaining political and cultural authority through protest and outreach. The visual cues of both environmentalism and the counterculture gave us an idea of what an environmental activist was supposed to have looked like, and this cannot be dismissed. The conservative, even reactionary, political

impulses were just as much a part of the story of America in the 60s and 70s, as political liberalism or the counterculture. These themes must be allowed to take their place in our environmentalist imaginary. The social contexts within which grassroots environmental activism took place cannot be treated like local color. American environmentalism becomes more complicated and satisfying when we treat these contexts as vital to our understanding of its history.