

PINIO

FEATURED LETTER

Clarifying The Record On Wal-Mart Proposal

Yes, the Super Wal-Mart application is before the Toms River and Manchester Township Planning boards and is again being debated, but the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) has not approved "mitigation, i.e. moving the resident snake to a nearby area," as stated in your news article ("Super Wal-Mart Proposal Back In Front Of The Public," *Manchester Times*, February 24).

There is currently a second building application pending with the NJDEP to place a Wal-Mart on the property which sits on the border of Toms River and Manchester Township, but no permits have been issued. This same application is pending before the Manchester and Toms River Township Planning boards and has not yet received approvals.

The new pending application does not move any pine snakes. The NJDEP Land Use Regulations state that, "development is prohibited unless it can be demonstrated that the threatened wildlife would not be directly or through secondary im-

pacts adversely affected." Jay-Lin's environmental consultant for this new application is proposing to build around the Northern Pine Snake habitat that exists on site. They believe that by protecting the portion of the site which contains the snake habitat that they will be meeting this requirement.

When the first application was submitted to the NJDEP, the applicant hired an environmental consultant that radio tracked several Northern Pine Snakes and a winter snake den on the site. Mr. Grunin may have been told that "one snake wouldn't halt the project" but the denial they received was about more than one snake. As your article states, there were four reasons for the denial. The documented habitat is the one that has gotten the most press.

NJDEP through the first application process did not permit the moving of any threatened species and the environmental community applauds them for the decision.

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Alliance