

# **BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT MONTHLY REPORT**

December 21, 2021 to January 20, 2022

**Jason Hearon, Bureau Chief**  
Tyler Kinney, Habitat Planner  
Melissa Woerner, Habitat Planner

## **HABITAT PLANNING**

### **Melissa Woerner**

#### Northern Region

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner and Crew Supervisor Chris Murphy met virtually to code Geographic Information Systems (GIS) habitat patch files at the Clinton Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner provided a ranked list of northern WMAs to the Office of Geographic Information Systems (OGIS) to help plan for future GIS habitat patch coding priorities.

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner met with Gene Huntington from Steward Green to discuss upcoming maintenance needs of the 50 acres of warm season grass fields that were recently planted at the Lockatong WMA.

#### All Regions/Miscellaneous

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner attended a meeting with Southern Regional Superintendent Nathan Figley and southern Bureau of Law Enforcement (BLE) staff to discuss posting and enforcement details of the restricted area for the upcoming Pond Creek Marsh restoration project at the Higbee Beach WMA. Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner also attended a status update meeting regarding the restoration project and met with Division of Coastal Engineering (DCE) staff to discuss results of the meeting with BLE and the public notification process.

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner attended the following webinars: Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Wetland Seminar Series; Firescapes of the Mid-Atlantic: Challenges and Opportunities for implementing prescribed burning as a land management strategy; Happy Trails-From Vision to Implementation.

### **Tyler Kinney**

#### Southern Region

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney attended meetings with several contractors to review forestry mowing bid specs. Bids are due Friday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney is working with a farm service contractor to begin reclamation operations in several fields in the Port Republic WMA.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney attended several meetings with the Sandy Blue Acres Program and DCE to discuss ongoing beach restoration efforts in the New Sweden WMA.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney is attending to several requests from tenants of the Division's Farm Lease Program to ensure field access is suitable for the new round of leases.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney continues to work with the Division's OGIS to make progress in our WMA Planning initiative.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney organized and attended a meeting with all Division biologists conducting habitat management operations in the southern region. Updates were received on bog turtle, quail, and waterfowl management.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney is preparing maps and coordinating plans with external stakeholders for upcoming spring habitat management operations, including spring planting, field reclamations, pollinator habitat management, and the aerial seeding of waterfowl impoundments.

#### All Regions

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney reviewed training material and provided input for the Divisions Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice work group.

## **NORTHERN REGION**

### **Vacant, Regional Superintendent**

Jim Hartobey, Crew Supervisor  
Imre Bene, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Robert Bodnar, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Mark DeVito, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Trevor Hull, Heavy Equipment Operator

Christopher Murphy, Crew Supervisor  
Bill DeYoung, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Septembio Garo, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Jonathan Kenney, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Randy Ujvary, Wildlife Worker  
Stephen Wilson, Sr. Wildlife Worker

Pheasant stocking continued through December at the Berkshire Valley, Black River, Clinton, Flatbrook, Pequest, Walpack and Whittingham WMAs as well as the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

BLM staff conducted habitat management work at the Black River WMA. Working collaboratively with the New Jersey Forest Fire Service (NJFFS), several large brush piles of nonnative vegetation have been burned to make room for native habitat plantings. No fields will be burned.

BLM staff in the Northern Region have been working collaboratively with the NJFFS developing burn plans throughout the regions.

Selective field management maintenance has been begun on WMAs to improve or maintain wildlife habitat.

BLM staff met with Dam Safety to evaluate erosion damage to the berm at the Clinton WMA Pond Dam. The area is currently being analyzed to determine a solution.

Crews have been busy plowing and clearing snow, keeping main roads open for fire/police access and to allow employees access to the facilities.

BLM staff coordination of safety lights on the tankers has been delayed due to supply issues. The contractor said it will take about three weeks for the 80+ lights that have been ordered to arrive.

Covid-19 continues to cause problems for employees and work because of quarantines and staff out sick.

## **CENTRAL REGION**

### **Pete Winkler, Regional Superintendent**

Wendy Barbuck, Agency Services Rep. 1

Bill Torry, Crew Supervisor WMAs  
Timothy Crotchfelt, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Zachary Mahon, Wildlife Worker  
Tim Ruth, Wildlife Worker

Mike Haines, Crew Supervisor Equipment Operations  
Anthony Carben, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Brian Kubin, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Robert Madden, Heavy Equipment Operator

Crews completed stocking Pheasant and Quail according to the published schedule. Due to staff shortages from the COVID 19 pandemic, staff took on additional routes and worked longer hours to get all birds stocked.

The crew is customizing a new bed to fit a trout tank for our Hook Lift F550. This will enable more versatility for this vehicle during the trout stocking season. The beds can be interchanged throughout the season and the vehicle will no longer be tied up with a tank during the entire trout season.

Regional Superintendent Pete Winkler created maps and is coordinating with the Hydro Axe contractor to perform multiple projects at Assunpink, Musconetcong River, South Branch and Buckhorn Creek WMAs for early successional habitat enhancement.

Crews prepared snow removal equipment and performed preventative maintenance on tractors and other farming equipment.

Regional Superintendent Pete Winkler attended a virtual meeting with Ducks Unlimited and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to discuss potential marsh projects on WMAs.

Crews began maintenance and mowing of road edges throughout the Central Region WMAs.

Staff began the process of obtaining quotes for equipment purchases.

The following groups and activities utilized the Assunpink Conservation Center and the Central Office Meeting Room during this reporting period:

Bureau of Wildlife Management – Deer Project  
Fish and Game Council Executive Committee  
Bureau of Lands Management – Administration  
NJDEP – Bureau of Environmental Analysis & Restoration  
Bureau of Law Enforcement  
Navesink River Hunting Retrievers Club

## **SOUTHERN REGION**

### **Nathan Figley, Regional Superintendent**

Brad Heffley, Crew Supervisor  
Sean Clayton, Sr. Wildlife Worker

Dan Baker, Crew Supervisor  
Steve Dobrosky, Heavy Equipment Operator  
Jennings Jones, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Erin Peek, Heavy Equipment Operator

Mason Reeves, Crew Supervisor  
Nicholas Carros, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Johnnie McGaha, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Jeffrey Wettstein, Sr. Repairer

Seasonal - Rich Ingraldi, Curt Riggins

Southern region crews continue performing routine trash clean-up at boat ramps, shooting ranges, and other high use WMAs.

Road Crew staff began work at the Port Republic WMA prior to the Holidays and unfortunate bouts with Covid-19 have kept that job from being completed. Upon staff returning to work, the road leading to the Port Republic WMA will be graded. After Port Republic is completed, staff will move equipment to the Higbee Beach WMA.

Staff continue to issue Field Trial and Special Use Permits consistent with the latest State issued Covid-19 related Executive Orders.

Senior Repairer Jeff Wettstein had all furnaces serviced in Southern Region Offices and continues to work on renovations at the Southern Region Office.

Staff have cleared roads of downed trees that were inhibiting access to boat ramps, stocking areas, and WMA parking areas.

Regional Superintendent Nathan Figley provided the monthly report to Dam Safety for the no name dam located on the Salem River WMA.

Staff completed snow removal after two snow events.

Staff continues to monitor the Matt's Landing Dike in the Heislerville WMA. Sacrificial material was placed in a sinkhole until a permanent fix to the problem is completed.

During the last two weeks of pheasant/quail stocking, many staff were sidelined due to illnesses and stay at home orders relating to Covid-19. All areas and birds were stocked as scheduled and a BIG "Thank You" needs to go out to the following staff and volunteers for seeing this through: Sam Forlenza, Ryan Risher, Brianna Merriel, and Jay Cook. These individuals played a key role in getting all areas stocked, when 6 BLM staff members were unable to work (specifically in the Southern Region). Statewide BLM staff need to be recognized for their efforts during this period also, as they picked up additional stocking runs or switched to areas they have never stocked before.

Regional Superintendent Nathan Figley Worked with Regional Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney to select areas for field reclamations and creation of woodcock habitat. Bids are currently being received for this work.

Regional Superintendent Nathan Figley responded to a low water complaint in Mannington Township. No issues were observed and believe the low water to be a result of extremely low tides and lack of precipitation.

Regional Superintendent Nathan Figley will coordinate the Cumberland County Sportsmen's Federation Annual Trash Hunt due to the unfortunate passing of retired Regional Superintendent Lee Widjeskog. The trash hunt is when members of the County Federation cleanup WMAs located within Cumberland County.

The County Improvement Authority provides dumpsters, gloves, and bags for this event. Regional Superintendent Nate Figley will be providing maps for the Federation Members and working with the Cumberland Improvement Authority to see this program continues.

Regional Superintendent Nathan Figley participated as a panel member during interviews for the Heavy Equipment Operator Crew Supervisor Position for the Southern Region. Again, due to illnesses, a secondary interview date was scheduled and will take place later this month.

Meetings Attended: BLM Staff Weekly, BLM/BLE monthly, Money Island Meeting, Cumberland County Sportsmens Federation, Friends of Lake Audrey, Habitat Planning Meeting, Spring Planting Meeting, and Low-tech Marsh Restoration Meeting, DCE/BA/BLM Money Island and Bay Point Restoration

## **PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SECTION**

### **LAND ACQUISITIONS**

Lisa Carben, Executive Assistant

Nothing to report this period.