



NEW JERSEY PINELANDS COMMISSION

MONTHLY REPORT



A white-tailed deer fawn that was foraging with its mother at the Cloverdale Farm County Park in the Pinelands Area of Barnegat Township in August

AUGUST 2026

1 EXECUTIVE OFFICE

1.1 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

1.1A COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- **Personnel & Budget (P&B) Committee:** The Committee met on August 18, 2026. The staff provided routine financial and personnel updates. The Committee reviewed the FY2027 draft budgets and recommended their adoption by the full Commission in September. Staff provided an update on the Fenwick Manor Rehabilitation project and discussed other projects and initiatives planned for FY2027. The Committee met in closed session to discuss a proposal for payroll, time and attendance and human resource management services.
- **Policy & Implementation (P&I) Committee:** The Committee met on August 28, 2026, and heard a staff presentation on the status of the Garden State Parkway Interchange 44 project, approved in 2013, and considered Atlantic County's request for a sixth and final extension to complete its land preservation obligations under the associated Secondary Impacts Agreement. The Committee voted in favor of bringing a resolution authorizing the final extension to the full Commission for consideration.

1.1B OPEN PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

- A total of eleven Open Public Records Act (OPRA) requests were received in August. Five were sent responsive material, two were advised to schedule a file review, two were advised that there was no responsive material and two will be responded to in September.

1.1C OTHER

- The Chair and Executive Director will be meeting with Ed Potosnak, who is the new Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), at the Commission's office in October.

1.2 LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

1.2A LITIGATION

- **In Re Challenge of Clayton Sand Company to December 4, 2023 Amendments to N.J.A.C. 7:50-1.1 et seq., A-001476-23** – Clayton Sand Company filed a Notice of Appeal of the amendments to the Water Management Rules at N.J.A.C. 7:50-6.86(d)2 of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan(CMP) (i.e. the Kirkwood-Cohansey rules). The appeal challenged the rule adoption as procedurally and substantively defective. Oral argument occurred on October 29, 2025. The Appellate Division issued its decision on July 15, 2026, affirming the Commission's adoption of the Kirkwood-Cohansey amendments to the Water Management rules of the CMP. In its decision, the Court found that none of the arguments advanced by the Appellants in opposition to the rules were persuasive. Commission staff has asked the Division of Law to

request the Court publish the decision in this case. Publication would make the current unpublished decision precedential.

- **Hovsons, Inc. et.al. v. Babbit, et. al., Civil Action No. 00-3943 (MLC/TJB)** – In 2024, Hovsons, Inc. filed a motion with the Federal Court seeking to enforce the terms of the 2004 settlement agreement between Hovsons, the NJDEP and the Commission related to development of the Heritage Minerals tract in Manchester Township. The tract is located in the Pinelands National Reserve, outside the Pinelands Area. Multiple mediation sessions occurred between September 2024 and July 2025. On October 24, 2025, Hovsons submitted a revised concept plan for development of the site and a draft of updated settlement terms. Hovsons submitted the same concept plan to the court as part of its challenge to Manchester Township’s Housing Element and Fair Share Plan to satisfy the municipality’s fourth round affordable housing obligation. Mediation sessions were conducted on December 8, 2025, January 5, 2026 and January 12, 2026 to discuss Hovsons’ proposed settlement terms and changes made by NJDEP and the Commission. Additionally, the Pinelands Alliance (PA), which was a participant in the 2004 litigation but not a signatory to the settlement, requested to participate in the mediation. In February, Hovsons agreed to permit PA to review and provide comments on the final draft of an amendment to the 2004 settlement agreement once it has been negotiated. The parties continue to discuss amendments to the 2004 settlement agreement. A meeting with representatives of NJDEP, Hovsons and DR Horton is scheduled for September 15, 2026. This meeting does not involve any Pinelands issues.
- **Southampton Twp., N.J., Letter of Interpretation #2256, Block 1903, Lots 40 & 40.01 - OAL Docket No. EPC-17684-2024S** - This is an appeal of a Letter of Interpretation (LOI) regarding a wetlands boundary determination for Block 1903, Lots 40 and 40.01 in Southampton Township. The matter has been placed on the inactive list, pending resolution of the Chancery matter involving Artistic Materials (see below).
- **Artistic Materials, Inc. and Michael J. Finnegan, Southampton Township (App. No. 1997-0010.002)**: This litigation involves a parcel in the Pinelands Agricultural Production Area that is subject to a Pinelands Development Credit (PDC) deed restriction. On January 2, 2025, the Attorney General’s office filed a complaint in Superior Court on behalf of the Commission and the NJDEP. The two agencies are jointly seeking: (1) declaratory judgement finding that the current industrial and commercial use of the property and wetlands disturbances violate the PDC deed restriction and the CMP; (2) an order enforcing the PDC deed restriction and the CMP, specifically requiring the defendants to immediately cease non-agricultural industrial and commercial activity on the parcel and to restore the property in accordance with the PDC deed restriction and the CMP; (3) an order compelling the defendants to restore wetlands on the parcel in compliance with the Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act and pay civil penalties; and (4) an order compelling the defendants to remove the stockpiled solid waste and properly dispose of it in accordance with the Solid Waste Management Act and pay civil penalties. The discovery process, both written discovery and depositions, in this matter is complete and motions in limine have been filed. The trial has been rescheduled to September 22-24, September 29-October 1, and October 6-9. The pending motions in limine will be heard by the Court and decided on the first day of trial before the trial begins.

- In the Matter of Application #1987-0276.12 to the Pinelands Commission for a Certificate of Filing by Hexa Builders , LLC – Docket No. A-003527-A:** This matter involves an appeal of a determination by the Executive Director that an amended Certificate of Filing was required for the development of a data center on a parcel in Monroe Township’s Regional Growth Area. The applicant had previously obtained a Certificate of Filing for the development of two warehouses on the parcel. The applicant subsequently sought a determination by the Commission staff as to whether an application for an amended Certificate of Filing was required to construct a 1,000,000 sq. ft data center and a 500,000 sq. ft. warehouse instead of the development originally proposed. Staff advised the applicant that an application for an amended Certificate of Filing was required. The applicant subsequently submitted the application and associated \$5,000 application fee. The applicant’s counsel then submitted a request for an administrative appeal of the determination pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:50-4.91. This request was denied because the CMP does not afford the right of appeal of a determination by the Executive Director that submission of an application is required. The current appeal was filed with the Appellate Division at the end of June. The Appellate Division’s case manager questioned whether the decision the appellants sought to appeal was a final agency action subject to the Court’s jurisdiction. Consequently, she requested a finality letter from the parties on June 30, 2026. Appellant submitted its letter arguing why the staff determinations were final decisions on July 14, 2026. It also submitted a motion for leave to file an interlocutory appeal on that same date. The Commission’s letter explaining why the staff decisions did not constitute final agency actions was filed on July 22, 2026. The Commission’s brief in opposition to the Appellant’s Motion for Leave to File an Interlocutory Appeal was filed on August 7, 2026. The Court issued two decisions on August 31, 2026, the first denying Hexa’s motion to file an interlocutory appeal and the second denying Hexa’s motion to file a reply brief in response to the Commission’s July 22, 2026 letter.

1.2B LEGISLATION

The Legislature is still recessed. Legislative sessions are expected resume in mid-September.

A summary of legislation specific to the Pinelands Area or Commission is provided below. A summary of other pending legislation pertaining to matters of interest to the Commission attached at the end of the document (Attachment 1).

Pinelands Specific Legislation

<u>Bill No.(s)</u>	<u>Prime Sponsor(s)</u>	<u>Synopsis</u>	<u>Current Status</u>
<u>A4860/S4118</u>	Sauickie, Dunn, Sweeney/Bucco, Tiver	"Fairness for School Districts in Development Restricted Areas Act"; provides additional State school aid to certain school districts located in municipalities that are part of Highlands or Pinelands preservation areas	Introduced, 5/4/26, referred to Assembly Education Committee and 5/11/26, referred to Senate Education Committee
<u>S4522</u>	Steinhardt, Tiver	Establishes State school aid category to support certain school districts located in	Introduced, 6/26/26, referred to Senate Education Committee

		municipalities that are part of Highlands or Pinelands preservation areas	
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1.2C INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENTS

- Evesham Township:** The Township is proposing a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that would accommodate surfacing of an existing trail and parking improvements within wetlands and wetlands buffers in the Black Run Preserve. The MOA would also address a number of outstanding violations in the Preserve, where development was undertaken without application to, or approval by, the Commission. The Executive Director met with Township representatives and the Pinelands Alliance on July 2, 2026 to discuss concerns with grant funding deadlines related to progress on the proposed MOA. Staff then met with representatives from Evesham Township, their engineers and a representative from the New Jersey Conservation Foundation on July 21st. During that meeting, all agreed that to move forward with the MOA process, a wetlands delineation and at least one test pit needed to be done at the parking lot across from the Black Run Preserve on Kettle Run Road. The Township's proposed MOA includes improvement of this parking lot to accommodate accessible parking spaces adjacent to the trailhead for the proposed accessible trail. A joint field visit by Commission staff and municipal consultants was conducted on August 19, 2026. On August 26, 2026, staff met with representatives from Evesham Township to discuss the results of the wetlands work and their potential impact on the proposed ADA trail. Another meeting is scheduled for September 16, 2026.
- South Jersey Transportation Authority (SJTA):** Future development at the Atlantic City International Airport is the subject of a 2004 MOA between the Commission and SJTA. An amendment to that MOA was executed in 2019. Both the MOA and the 2019 Amendment allow deviations from the CMP's threatened and endangered species protection standards. Additional development is now being proposed in the northwest quadrant of the Airport property, necessitating discussion of another MOA Amendment. SJTA met with the Commission Chair and Executive Director on July 21, 2025, as the first step in consideration of an amendment to the MOA. Upon SJTA's submission of a concept plan and related information about the project, including proposed offsetting measures that might be incorporated in the MOA Amendment, a presentation will be scheduled at a P&I Committee meeting. On October 8, 2025, SJTA advised that it would provide a detailed proposal to the Commission after gathering additional information through a habitat assessment study as part of the Environmental Impact Statement required by FAA. SJTA submitted a public development application on April 27, 2026 and the required one-third application fee for review of T&E protocols and survey results on May 11, 2026. Staff reviewed the T&E protocol, and, by letter dated July 16, 2026, responded with comments and suggested revisions to ensure the proposed survey work would provide the necessary information.
- Cape May County Municipal Utilities Authority (CMCMUA), Woodbine Borough and the NJ Department of Human Services:** On June 16, 2026, Commission Chair Laura E. Matos and the Executive Director met with CMCMUA Executive Director Joseph Rizzutto and other CMCMUA staff and consultants to discuss the CMCMUA's proposed shared conveyance system. The

system would include installation of infrastructure to convey leachate from the Cape May Landfill to the CMCMUA Seven Mile Beach/Middle Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility. Future sanitary sewer flows from Woodbine Borough and the NJ Department of Human Services Woodbine Developmental Center would also be accommodated. A small portion of the project is proposed in the Pinelands Area, with the remainder in the Pinelands National Reserve outside the Pinelands Area. Because the project would involve deviations from CMP permitted use and environmental standards, an MOA would be necessary. The CMCMUA made a presentation on the proposed MOA to the P&I Committee at its July 31, 2026 meeting. Additional discussion of the proposal is scheduled for the Commission's September 11, 2026 meeting.

1.3 HUMAN RESOURCES

- **Recruitment:** The MIS Specialist position was posted in August, and recruitment for the vacant Business Services Specialist position is expected to begin within the next few weeks. Recruitment efforts will continue over the coming months to fill both positions.
- **Employee Benefits:** An Open Enrollment Benefitsolver meeting is scheduled for mid-September to help HR staff prepare for the upcoming enrollment period. Open Enrollment for employees will begin on October 1, 2026.

2 INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

- **Interagency Council on Climate Resilience (IAC) Vulnerability Assessment Work Group:** The Workgroup Chairs closed down the Vulnerability Assessment Workgroup and they shared outcomes of the collaboration. The group focused on approaches to planning for the impacts of climate change and how agencies looked for vulnerabilities within the scope of their operations or management. Staff participated in monthly meetings and previously presented to the group an overview of the Commission's Pinelands Management Area boundary assessment for climate change impacts. Municipalities are beginning to prepare vulnerability assessments as part of their overall planning activities. A presentation from the Sustainability Institute at The College of New Jersey about the City of Egg Harbor vulnerability assessment is planned for the September P&I Committee meeting.
- **Pinelands Native Plant Seed Mix Project:** Pinelands Commission staff members discussed the goals to develop lists of native Pinelands seed mixes during the first meeting of the project working group on August 25, 2026. The working group includes representation from the Commission, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Land Management, two native plant nurseries, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture and the NJ Plant Partnership. During the first meeting, participants discussed the goals of the project and introduced themselves. Participants also discussed various opportunities, challenges, and plans for the next meeting.
- **New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU):** On August 12, 2026, NJBPU issued an order selecting projects for awards in the first solicitation of its Dual-Use Solar Energy Pilot Program. Project selection was based on a number of evaluation criteria, including geographic location, interconnection planning, technical feasibility, proposed monitoring of the quality of the

agricultural use and proposed design of the required research plan. Of the 16 applications approved by NJBPU, only one is located in the Pinelands Area. Commission staff met with NJBPU staff on August 26, 2026 to discuss the recent board order and ways of improving coordination between the two agencies as the Pilot Program moves forward.

- **New Jersey Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA):** Staff continued to coordinate with OPA regarding Plan Endorsement for Pinelands municipalities with lands outside the Pinelands Area but within the Pinelands National Reserve. On July 22, staff provided comments on proposed State Policy Map and center changes associated with Plan Endorsement petitions from Dennis Township, Little Egg Harbor Township, and Manchester Township and met with OPA on August 7 to discuss those comments. On August 18, staff participated in an OPA-organized meeting with Dennis Township to discuss five proposed centers, three of which are inconsistent with the CMP because they are located outside Regional Growth Areas, Pinelands Villages, and Pinelands Towns, where the CMP generally directs and accommodates growth. The Township was informed that there may be an opportunity to amend the management area boundaries in those areas, but doing so would require the Township to seek Commission certification of its entire Pinelands National Reserve area. Staff will continue to coordinate with OPA and affected municipalities on Plan Endorsement and State Policy Map revisions.

3 LAND USE PROGRAMS

3.1 CONFORMANCE ACTIVITY

	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
Master Plans/Ordinances Received		
Adopted	15	125
Drafted or Introduced	11	64
Total ¹	23	151
Substantial Issue Finding ²	0	6
No Substantial Issue Finding	17	96
No Issue Finding	8	19
Total	25	121
Finding Letters Issued³	15	69

¹The total accounts for unique master plans and ordinances received (i.e., it does not double count drafted, introduced, or adopted submissions for the same ordinance).

² Ordinances and Master Plans that are found to raise substantial issues with respect to the standards of the CMP require formal review and approval by the full Commission.

³ A single finding letter can pertain to multiple master plans/ordinances from the same municipality.

Notable Activity:

- **Data Center Ordinances:** As of the end of August, the Commission had reviewed ordinances from eight municipalities prohibiting data centers and determined that they raised no substantial issue with respect to the standards of the Pinelands CMP and could take effect. This included ordinances from Franklin Township and Hamilton Township that were reviewed during August. Similar ordinances adopted by four additional municipalities, Jackson Township, Medford Township, Plumsted Township, and Washington Township, are currently pending Commission review. Staff is also aware of similar ordinances introduced by three municipalities – Manchester Township, New Hanover Township, and Upper Township – that are pending final adoption.

3.2 CULTURAL RESOURCE ACTIVITY

Activity	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
Applications Reviewed	11	73
Surveys Required	1	4
Surveys Reviewed	1	12
Certificates of Appropriateness Required	0	1

Notable Activity:

- **Fenwick Manor Rehabilitation:** Surface preparation of Fenwick Manor's exterior continues, including removing the peeling paint by scraping and sanding and applying several coats of primer paint. Once the surface is completely prepped, the paint color will be applied. Pinelands staff chose an off-white color that closely resembles the earliest layer of historic paint exposed during paint removal.

Several new concrete foundation piers have been poured, and stabilization of the chimney foundations has begun. Pinelands Commission archaeologist Marc Paalvast is monitoring all construction tasks that include ground disturbance within the building's crawl spaces and around the chimney foundations. The excavated soil is being sifted through ¼ hardware cloth using a standing shaker screen, and artifacts are being collected, cleaned, and catalogued. So far, several interesting finds have been discovered, including a trunnel (or tree nail, used to hold house framing together), a two-pronged pitchfork (or hay fork), and a slip-trailed redware plate manufactured between the mid-18th and early-19 centuries.



Above: Exterior surface preparation underway on Fenwick Manor's street facing elevation.



Above: New concrete foundation piers in the Executive Director's office.



Above: Pinelands Commission archaeologist Marc Paalvast writing notes during construction monitoring.



Above: Photo of the two-pronged pitchfork, treenail, and historic ceramic plate found during archaeological monitoring.

3.3 PINELANDS DEVELOPMENT CREDIT (PDC) PROGRAM

Activity	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
PDCs Allocated ⁴	0.25	20.29
PDCs Severed ⁵	6.75	7.75
Acres Protected	211.69	252.77
PDCs Extinguished ⁶	0	8.50
Acres Protected	0	204.68
PDCs Sold	2.0	29.25
Average Sales Price per PDC	\$100,000	\$99,436
Average Sales Price per right	\$25,000	\$24,859
PDCs Redeemed ⁷	0	22.25

Notable Activity:

- **Allocations:** A Letter of Interpretation (LOI) amending an unexpired LOI was issued to allocate 0.25 PDC to a 4.63 acre farm in Southampton Township. The parcel is located in an Agricultural Production Area.
- **Severances:** In August, 6.75 PDCs were severed, permanently preserving 8.23 acres in the Preservation Area District in Woodland Township and 203.46 acres in the Agricultural Production Area in Shamong Township.
- **Sales:** Two sales transactions were processed in August, involving a total of 2.0 PDCs (8 rights).
- **Annual Report:** The [PDC Bank's FY26 Annual Report](#) was issued on August 17, 2026. The Report was posted on the Bank's webpage and distributed to the Governor, the Legislature, PDC Bank Board members, Commissioners, appraisers and County Agriculture representatives. Staff will make a presentation on the Report at the Commission's October 9, 2026 meeting.

⁴ **PDC Allocations** are official calculations done by the Commission to determine the number of PDCs to which a parcel of land is entitled. The allocation is identified in a Letter of Interpretation.

⁵ **Severance** is the act of formally separating PDCs from a parcel of land. This occurs after recordation of a deed restriction that permanently preserves the parcel and is documented through issuance of one or more PDC Certificates.

⁶ PDCs are considered **extinguished** when the State purchases a farmland easement or parcel of land to which PDCs have been allocated by the Commission.

⁷ **Redemption** occurs when the owner of one or more PDC Certificates designates them for use in association with a specific development application. The signature of the municipality in which the development project is located is required. Once redeemed, the PDCs cannot be sold or reused.

3.4 SPECIAL PROJECTS

- **Pinelands Infrastructure Trust Fund (PITF):** At its August meeting, the Commission adopted a resolution amending the Pinelands Infrastructure Master Plan. The amendments revised some of the infrastructure project evaluation criteria and set a 2% interest rate for any loan awarded in a future round of funding. The revised criteria may allow regional infrastructure to serve multiple municipalities and development projects, or to serve projects in municipalities with economic challenges, to rank higher in a matrix of evaluation criteria. The Amendment also limited eligible categories of infrastructure to water supply or wastewater projects to serve new development or redevelopment in a Pinelands Regional Growth Area. Transportation projects will not be eligible for funding in a future funding round. On August 26th, the Commission issued a Request for Proposals to solicit infrastructure funding projects that will be evaluated using the matrix of criteria. The deadline for project proposals is January 11, 2027. A future amendment of the Infrastructure Master Plan is planned to adopt a new list of priority projects for a combination of loans and grants totaling approximately \$11 million.

4 REGULATORY PROGRAMS

4.1 APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Activity	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
Pre-Application Conferences	1	30
Certificates of Filing	22	170
Public Development Reports	2	20
NJDEP/PC Forestry Application Complete	0	2
PDC Letters of Interpretation	1	15
Non-PDC Letters of Interpretation	0	0
MOA Consistency Determinations	2	39
Review of Agency Determinations	48	456

4.2 NOTABLE APPLICATIONS

- **Office/Warehouse, Monroe Township (Applicant: Hexa Builders, App. No 1987-0276.012):** Application for 1,100,000 square foot office/warehouse building and a 522,000 square foot office/warehouse building

Property Details

- 162-acre parcel

- Partially in Regional Growth Area (115 acres) and partially in Rural Development Area (47 acres)
- Approximately 90% of proposed development in Regional Growth Area
- Serviced by public sanitary sewer and public water

Background

12/18/2024:	Certificate of Filing issued for proposed warehouse development
4/23/2026:	Staff advised applicant that a proposed 1,000,000 square foot data center and a 500,000 square foot warehouse on the parcel, instead of original proposal, required application to the Commission and issuance of an Amended Certificate of Filing
4/28/2026:	Application for an Amended Certificate of Filing submitted
5/18/2026:	Applicant submitted an appeal of the staff determination that Amended Certificate of Filing necessary
7/10/2026:	Staff issued letter requesting information to complete Amended Certificate of Filing Application for the proposed data center

Updates	
8/11/2026:	Staff issued letter indicating that the Preliminary Site Plan approval for original 2024 warehouse proposal raised issues with CMP standards and could not take effect
<i>For Appeal - See Litigation 1.2A</i>	

- **Establishment of a Restaurant, Franklin Township (Applicant: Sweet Amalia Farm Market and Kitchen, App. No. 1982-3298.004):** Application for change in use of a retail commercial farm market to a restaurant to address an outstanding violation. Application also proposes the removal of the existing 1,108-square-foot commercial building to address groundwater quality (septic dilution) standards

Property Details

- 2.6-acre parcel
- Rural Development Area
- Serviced by existing onsite septic system

Background

8/2023-5/2026:	Staff and applicant exchanged correspondence regarding the information necessary to complete the application and address the violation. The main issue concerned the need to demonstrate that the wastewater generated from the restaurant use met the Commission's groundwater quality (septic dilution) standard
5/14/2026:	Staff advised applicant that if the days per year of operation of the proposed restaurant were reduced from 298 to 251, the proposed restaurant would meet the groundwater quality (septic dilution) standard
6/22/2026:	Staff received response from applicant proposing to operate the restaurant use no more than 251 days per year and additional information

Updates	
7/2026-8/2026:	Staff and applicant's agent had discussions and exchanged correspondence regarding the establishment of two stormwater basins on the parcel
8/5/2026:	Staff sent a follow-up email requesting additional information regarding the two existing stormwater basins on the parcel

- **Commercial Warehouse, Hamilton Township (Applicant: SunCap Property Group, App. No. 1982-2997.007):**

Property Details

- 1,228,000 square foot commercial warehouse proposed on portion of former Atlantic City Racetrack parcel
- 256-acre parcel
- Regional Growth Area
- Original application for five-story 652,060 square foot warehouse subsequently revised to propose a two-story 1,228,000 square foot warehouse

Background

- 9/15/2025: Certificate of Filing issued
- 6/22/2026: Staff issued letter requesting the submission of additional information necessary to review the Township preliminary and final site plan approval and Certificate of Appropriateness issued for proposed development
- 7/16/2026: Staff issued letter indicating that Township and County approvals could not take effect because the development raised issues with the CMP, including stormwater management and cultural resource protection standards
- 7/2026: Applicant submitted information to address issues raised in 7/16/2026 Commission letter

Updates	
8/26/26:	Staff issued letter advising of additional information necessary to address issues raised by the above referenced municipal and county approvals

- **Reconstruction of Golf Course Clubhouse Building, Hammonton Town (Applicant: Frog Rock Golf Course/Colasurdo, App. No. 1989-0931.003):** Reconstruction of golf course clubhouse destroyed by fire in October 2025

Property Details

- 19.64-acre parcel
- Pinelands Town Management Area
- Eight outstanding violations on the parcel, including development without application to the Commission and development within required wetland buffers

Background

- 1/2026-3/2026: Staff and the applicant had several meetings and exchanged correspondence regarding the violations and the proposed reconstruction of the golf course clubhouse
- 3/18/26: Application filed for golf course clubhouse reconstruction
- 3/2026-7/2026: Staff and applicant held additional meetings and exchanged correspondence regarding information necessary to complete the application and address the violations

Updates	
8/7/26:	Staff issued a second letter advising applicant of information necessary to complete application and address violations
8/26/26:	Staff received a letter from applicant's attorney reserving the right to appeal the Executive Director's determination that the application cannot be deemed complete due to existing violations on the parcel pursuant to NJAC 7:50-4.2(c)1iii
Another meeting has been scheduled with the applicant's representatives for 9/9/2026	

4.3 OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

- **Emergency Services Building, Southampton Township:** On August 13, 2026, staff met with representatives of Southampton Township regarding the proposed construction of an emergency services building at the site of the existing municipal building, which is located in the Pinelands Village of Vincentown. The staff discussed application requirements with the municipal officials, specifically the stormwater management requirements.
- The Director of Regulatory Programs is meeting individually with all 12 staff members to gather input on strategies to better balance workloads, streamline operations, address the current vacant position and support the department's future priorities and needs.

5 SCIENCE

5.1 ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

- **Water Level Monitoring:** With assistance from the Communications Office, staff recorded water levels at 33 forest plots and 30 ponds within the Commission's long-term monitoring network. Only one of the 30 ponds contained water in August. Water level data was downloaded from one of the seven ponds that contains automatic water level recorders.
- **Pinelands-wide Water Quality Monitoring:** Science staff measured pH and specific conductance at the 47 stream sites that are monitored in April, June, August, and October of each year. Retired Commission Research Scientist Marilyn Sobel was rehired to complete an analysis of the trends in pH and specific conductance over time. Dr. Sobel visited staff in August to update them on her trend analysis.

- Rare Snake Monitoring:**
 Science staff continued to capture, process, and release snakes found at study sites. The eggs that gravid corn snakes and pine snakes laid in the lab or were excavated in June and July began to hatch in August. After the hatchlings shed their skin, they are weighed, measured, sexed, PIT tagged, and released. Science staff processed and released several clutches of hatchlings that shed in August. A few other clutches of hatchlings still need to shed prior to processing and the few remaining clutches of eggs will hatch in early September.



Above: A clutch of hatchling corn snakes that have already shed (top) and a clutch of hatchling pine snakes with opaque eyes that are about to shed (bottom).

- Science staff began to include timber rattlesnakes in the Rare Snake Monitoring Program. Unlike corn snakes and pine snakes, which lay eggs and then leave the eggs to hatch on their own, timber rattlesnakes gestate their young inside their body over the season and then give birth to live neonates. In August, staff captured six gravid rattlesnakes from multiple gestation sites located in a relatively small study area, and five of the six females gave birth so far. Neonates from one female shed and she and her neonates were weighed, measured, sexed, and PIT tagged. A radio transmitter will be attached externally to the female and she will be tracked to her hibernacula. After the transmitter is attached, the female and neonates will be released at the gestation site. The remainder of the rattlesnakes will be processed and released in September after they shed.

- A young pine snake found crossing a sand road was captured and implanted with a radio transmitter. Tracking young snakes may shed light on this largely unknown portion of their lives.

5.2 LONG TERM STUDIES

- **Box Turtle Study:** Staff has outfitted some box turtles with rechargeable GPS transmitters that automatically collect turtle locations using satellites. GPS transmitters were swapped out with freshly charged units as needed. Turtles with regular radio transmitters that cannot be recharged received new replacement transmitters with fresh batteries.
- **Snake Fungal Disease (SFD)**
Monitoring: Science staff continued to swab new snakes and all recently born corn snakes, pine snakes, and timber rattlesnakes. The swabs will be sent to collaborators at Virginia Tech to better understand the disease.

Other: Science staff deployed an acoustic bat detector at one focal pond in continuation of the Commission's partnership with New Jersey Fish and Wildlife Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP). ENSP will begin analyzing recordings in the fall to better understand Pinelands bat populations.



Top photo: Adult female timber rattlesnake partly inside a clear tube for processing. **Middle photo:** Recently born rattlesnake neonates with the mother. **Bottom photo:** Neonate rattlesnake partly inside a clear tube for processing.

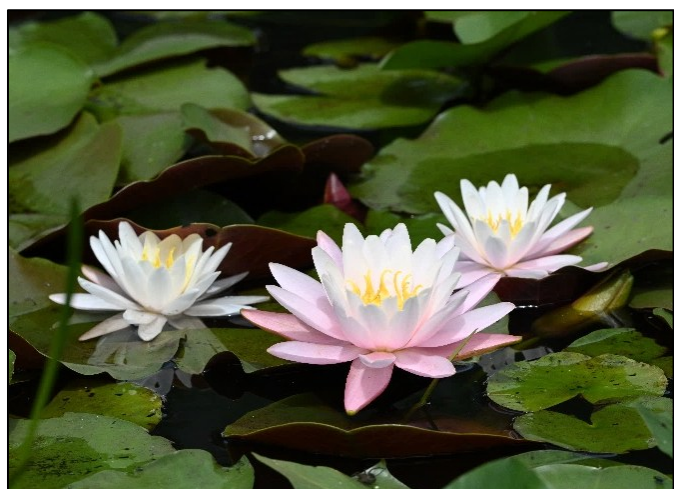
6 COMMUNICATIONS

6.1 COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLICATIONS

- **Inquiries/Correspondence:** The Communications Office received and responded to approximately 60 inquiries from the public in August, including phone calls, e-mails, and media inquiries.
- **Website:** Commission staff made routine edits to the website in August, including numerous updates to the Pinelands Infrastructure Trust Act webpage. Additionally, Communications Office staff contacted the New Jersey Office of Information Technology (OIT) to inquire about redesigning the Commission's website. A representative from OIT confirmed that the agency will work with the Commission to undertake the website redesign project this year. The Commission will make use of the state's newest website templates, while also identifying features the agency wants to keep and new enhancements. Commission staff members are scheduled to participate in a project kickoff meeting with OIT on September 4, 2026.
- **Social Media:** In August, staff shared 329 photos and five videos on the Commission's Instagram site, 67 posts on X, and 71 posts on Bluesky. The Commission's content (photos and videos) garnered more than 116,000 views and 7,483 interactions on Instagram (while adding 103 followers for the month) and 1,732 views (for a watch time of 125 hours) on YouTube in August. Thirty of the Commission's photos were featured on other Instagram sites in August.



Above: The Commission shared 329 photos on Instagram in August, including this photo of an American copper butterfly sipping nectar from native Maryland goldenaster flowers in the agency's rain garden.



Above: Commission staff shared 71 posts on the agency's Bluesky account in August, including this photo of pink fragrant water lilies at Cloverdale Farm County Park in the Pinelands.

6.2 EVENTS, OUTREACH & INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS

- **Pinelands Speaker Series:** More than 40 people attended the third Pinelands Speaker Series presentation at the Commission's headquarters on August 6, 2026. Presenter Patrick Burritt, a Research Scientist with the Pinelands Commission, discussed the secret lives of eastern box turtles, while delving into their life history, behaviors, activity range, and habitat use, along with providing details about ongoing research and unique stories from the field after 5 years of radio tracking this them. He also brought two live turtles that are a part of the Commission's radio tracking study: Blue and Skinny. Commission scientists are currently radio tracking 100 box turtles in the Pinelands.

The final Pinelands Speaker Series program of 2026 will explore frog diversity and adaption and will be held at 2 p.m. on September 3, 2026.

- **Pinelands-themed World Water Monitoring Challenge:** Staff continued to coordinate this year's event, which will be held at Batsto Lake on October 23, 2026.

- **Barnegat Bay Partnership:** Joel Mott, Principal Public Programs Specialist, chaired the Barnegat Bay Partnership's Communication and Education Committee meeting on August 19, 2026.

- **Pinelands Short Course:** Staff continued to plan for the 2027 Pinelands Short Course.

- **Pinelands Merchandise:** During August, Commission staff processed four transactions while garnering a total of \$67 in sales of Pinelands merchandise. All proceeds from the sales of the Commission's merchandise and donations go to the Kathleen M. Lynch-van de Sande Fund. The fund was established in memory of Ms. Lynch-van de Sande, a Pinelands Commission Environmental Specialist who died in a car accident in June 1989. Sales and donations will support the planting of native Pinelands plants and projects that raise awareness about native Pinelands plants.



Above: Patrick Burritt, a Research Scientist with the Pinelands Commission, discussed the secret lives of eastern box turtles during a presentation at the agency's office on August 6, 2026.



Above: The Commission's free presentation on box turtles featured two turtles that are currently being radio tracked. This box turtle is named Skinny.

7 INFORMATION SYSTEMS

- **Pinelands Commission Information System Upgrades:** The Pinelands Commission Information System (PCIS) is the internal system of record for all applications to the Pinelands and associated transactions. Staff reexamined existing PCIS dashboard reports utilized by Regulatory Programs to address missing data. The reports were reworked and tested. Staff anticipate these reports being approved and rolled out next month, as well as being incorporated into the new Pinelands Application Information System (PAIS). Staff continued to participate in the weekly PAIS working group meetings, which serve to highlight progress and raise critical questions on the demonstration screens and workflow. Numerous updates were shown, including the integrated document editing and management system and transaction management.
- **Pinelands Development Credit Bank:** Staff provide operational support for the PDC Bank throughout the year. An error in the PDC Bank software occurred in the process of a severance event. Staff immediately researched this and applied a fix.
- **Cybersecurity:** Vigilance to protect the internal networks, hardware, and data of the Pinelands Commission is critical in today's networked world. The Information Systems staff participated in the monthly call hosted by the New Jersey Cybersecurity & Communications Integration Cell (NJCCIC). Staff coordinated with the NJCCIC to research and remediate a phishing attack, which was successfully identified and blocked by the Falcon Crowdstrike software.
- **Geographic Information Systems (GIS):** Staff participated in the New Jersey Geospatial Forum monthly meeting to facilitate GIS collaboration with other state agencies. From this meeting, the Pinelands Commission learned of possible changes to the commercial providers of aerial imagery utilized by the state. Staff followed up by scheduling a conference call with NearMap and doing further research on Vexcel Data imagery.
- **Technology Enhancements:** In July, staff phased out three Windows 10 desktops and replaced them with new machines. Staff received results of the site survey conducted by the New Jersey Office of Information Technology to determine the appropriate number and placement of WiFi Access Points to provide wireless network coverage in all the buildings. Staff will work with Business Services to make final decisions on placement and installation of the devices. Staff attended the biweekly Microsoft Copilot Artificial Intelligence working group meetings to ensure the Pinelands Commission is aware of all developments in this fast-paced field. Based on topics from the call, staff enabled "Agent Studio" for all active Copilot licenses, which enables more powerful model building.

Rutgers Scarlet Service Internship Program (RSSI): The RSSI program is an internship administered by Rutgers University to provide opportunities for exceptional undergraduate students at non-profit agencies with a public service mission. The Information Systems office concluded the summer 2026 program with additional mentoring and an exit interview. The Rutgers intern shared her thanks for all that she learned and feels this experience has given her a new perspective on career choices outside of "Big Tech."

8 BUSINESS OFFICE

8.1 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- **Application Fees:** August 2026, Net Total: \$108,714.01 Fiscal Year to Date Total: \$149,594.93. This equates to 18.70% of the Fiscal Year 2027 anticipated fee revenue of \$800,000. The net total for August includes 37 online application payments totaling \$50,541.55.
- **RFP #27-001** – An RFP for Payroll, Time & Attendance and Human Resource Management Services was issued on July 1, 2026, with proposals due on August 5, 2026. The Evaluation Committee and Executive Director's recommendation to award the contract was discussed with the Personnel & Budget Committee in closed session on August 18, 2026. Subsequently, by letter dated August 25, 2026, staff issued a notice of award to PrimePoint, LLC of Westampton, NJ.
- The FY2027 Draft Budgets were presented and discussed at the August 18, 2026, P&B Committee meeting. The Committee recommended their adoption by the full Commission in September.
- On August 20, 2027, staff met with a Budget Specialist in the NJ Department of the Treasury to review budget projections for FY2028, confirm required salary program increases, and discuss other potential needs and requests related to the Commission's appropriation.

8.2 FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

- A hose bib under the floor in Fenwick Manor was removed and closed off. The pipe had potential to freeze and burst.

Attachment 1:**Pinelands Related Legislation****Data Centers**

<u>Bill No.(s)</u>	<u>Prime Sponsor (s)</u>	<u>Synopsis</u>	<u>Current Status</u>
<u>A796/S731</u>	Bailey, Danielsen, Calabrese, Pinter Marin/Burzichelli and McKeon	Requires electric public utilities to develop and apply special rules for certain data centers to protect non-data center customers from increased costs	Approved by the Governor on 7/7/2016 (P.L.2026, C.32.)
<u>A4096/S3379</u>	Venezia, Haider, Bagolie/Ruiz, Mukherji	Requires data center owners and operators to submit semi-annual water and energy use reports to BPU	Approved by the Governor on 8/27/2026 (P.L.2026, c.75.)
<u>A3966/S4400</u>	Karabinchak, Bhalla, Collazos-Gill/Diegnan, Beach	Requires DEP to conduct study of short and long term effects of water use by large-scale data centers	Assembly Bill: Reported out of Environment and Solid Waste Committee with Amendments; referred to Appropriations Committee on 3/16/2016 Senate Bill: Introduced and Referred to Environment and Energy Committee on 6/4/2026
<u>A1170/S680</u>	Danielsen/Smith, McKeon	Requires energy usage plan for proposed artificial intelligence data centers and cryptocurrency mining facilities; requires all electricity for artificial intelligence data centers and cryptocurrency mining facilities to be derived from new clean energy sources	Assembly Bill – Introduced and referred to Telecommunications and Utilities Committee on 1/13/2026 Senate Bill – Introduced and Referred to Environment and Energy Committee on 1/13/26. Reported from Committee, Second Reading and Referred to the Budget and Appropriations Committee on 3/16/26.
<u>A4945/S4401</u>	Miller, Bailey, Rowan/Moriarty, Beach	Requires BPU to conduct study on environmental, infrastructural, and	Assembly Bill: Introduced and referred to Telecommunications and

		financial impacts of data center development in the State	Utilities Committee on 5/7/2026 Senate Bill: Introduced and referred to Environment and Energy Committee on 6/4/2026
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Water Infrastructure Funding

<u>Bill No.(s)</u>	<u>Prime Sponsor (s)</u>	<u>Synopsis</u>	<u>Current Status</u>
A2463/ S3722	McCoy, DeAngelo/ Bucco	Makes \$100 million in federal funds available to NJDEP for grants to local governments for drinking water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure projects	Assembly Bill – Introduced, Referred to Environment and Solid Waste Committee on 1/13/2026 Senate Bill – Introduced and referred to Environment and Energy Committee on 3/5/2026

Miscellaneous

<u>Bill No.(s)</u>	<u>Prime Sponsor (s)</u>	<u>Synopsis</u>	<u>Current Status</u>
A3877 / S2960	Coughlin, Speight, Reynolds-Jackson/ Mukherji	Establishes certain State funding preferences for municipalities that enhance opportunities to develop housing	Approved by the Governor on 8/27/2026 (P.L.2026, c.78).
A4275 / S3613	Hutchison, Miller, Oujano/Moriarty, McKnight	Requires OIT to establish an online Statewide tracking system for certain permits, licenses, certifications and form applications	Assembly Bill: Reported out of Assembly Committee, 2 nd Reading, on 6/23/2026 Senate Bill: Introduced and referred to State Government, Wagering, Tourism & Historic Preservation Committee on 2/19/2026

A4908/S3254	Collazos-Gill, Freiman/Mukherfi, Greenstein	Prohibits expenditure of Green Acres funds for purchase, use, installation or replacement of artificial turf fields	Assembly Bill: Introduced and referred to Environment and Solid Waste Committee on 5/7/2026 Senate Bill: Reported from Senate Committee, 2 nd Reading, and Referred to Budget and Appropriations Committee on 6/8/2026
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