



NEW JERSEY PINELANDS COMMISSION

MONTHLY REPORT



Native, rare slender rattlesnake-root (*Nabalus autumnalis*) blooming in the Pinelands in September. It receives special protection under the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan

SEPTEMBER 2026

1 EXECUTIVE OFFICE

1.1 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

1.1A COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- **Personnel & Budget (P&B) Committee:** The Committee did not meet in September.
- **Policy & Implementation (P&I) Committee:** During its meeting on September 25, 2026, the Committee heard a presentation on Climate Change Related Vulnerability Assessments prepared by the Sustainability Institute of the College of New Jersey for three Pinelands municipalities. Representatives from Evesham Township and Woodbine Borough discussed municipal participation in development of the assessments. Staff gave an overview of the Commission's role in reviewing the assessments for conformance with the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP).

1.1B OPEN PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

- A total of twelve Open Public Records Act (OPRA) requests were received in September. Four were sent responsive material, one was advised to schedule a file review, three were advised that there was no responsive material, one was advised that the request was overly broad and did not contain the specificity required by OPRA and three will be responded to in October.

1.1C OTHER

- On September 14, 2026, staff submitted the Commission's response to [Executive Order 19](#), which is related to the issues caused by junk fees (defined as "hidden, surprise, or excessively overpriced fees, including those associated with a good or service that provides little or no benefit to the consumer").

1.2 LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

1.2A LITIGATION

- **Hovsons, Inc. et.al. v. Babbitt, 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 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (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. A meeting among representatives of NJDEP, Hovsons and DR Horton occurred on September 15, 2026. NJDEP, Hovsons and DR Horton continue to discuss resolution of the NJDEP permitting requirements for the project.

- **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. The trial commenced on September 22 and continued through September 29. The trial dates at the end of September and beginning of October have been adjourned because of the unavailability of the Defendants' wetlands expert. It is expected that the trial will resume in mid to late October.
- **Heather Margenau v. Chaz Partners, Inc. at al. - Docket No. L-2901-25** – This case is a Tort Claims Act matter. The Plaintiff alleges they were injured at a spillway located at the Lake Oswego Dam. Plaintiff's claims against the Commission arise out of the Commission's Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) Consistency letter that was issued in accordance with the terms of a 1995 MOA between the Commission and the NJDEP, Division of Parks and Forestry, setting forth a simplified application process for specified activities undertaken by the Division in State Parks and Forests located in the Pinelands Area. A motion for Summary Judgment was filed on behalf of the Pinelands Commission in September. This motion was premised on the fact that the Commission is not legislatively authorized to hold interests in real property and lacked control of the site where the alleged injury occurred. On September 25, 2026, the Court denied the Commission's motion on the grounds that it was premature given discovery had not concluded.
- **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. An appeal was filed with the Appellate Division at the end of June. The Appellant also submitted a motion for leave to file an interlocutory appeal on July 14, 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. Hexa filed a Petition for Certification and a Motion for Leave to File an Interlocutory appeal to the New Jersey Supreme Court on September 21, 2026.

1.2B LEGISLATION

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>
A4860/S4118	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
S4522	Steinhardt, Tiver	Establishes State school aid category to support certain school districts located in municipalities that are part of Highlands or Pinelands preservation areas	Introduced, 6/26/26, referred to Senate Education Committee
A4994/S936	Rowan, Sauikie, Katz/Testa, Beach	Modifies definition of "aquaculture" throughout State law, including the Pinelands Protection Act, to include construction of facilities and appurtenant structures.	Assembly Bill: Passed by Assembly on 9/24/26; Received in the Senate and Referred to the Senate Environment and Energy Committee on 9/28/26 Senate Bill: Introduced, Referred to the Senate

			Environment and Energy Committee on 1/13/26
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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 Evesham Township to discuss the results of the wetlands work and their potential impact on the proposed ADA trail. Staff met with the Township on September 16, 2026 to discuss how and whether the Township wanted to proceed with its ADA trail proposal. The Township advised that it was looking into other options, including resurfacing an existing trail near Borton's Road. Commission staff provided its initial thoughts as to the application requirements for that trail and agreed to provide more detailed information shortly thereafter.
- 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. In September, FAA advised the Commission that SJTA has asked it to reconsider the need for an Environmental Impact Statement. As part of that request, the SJTA included a report detailing the threatened and endangered species work that had been

conducted on the site. A copy of this report was subsequently submitted to the Commission and is under review.

- **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 standards, an MOA would be necessary. The CMCMUA made presentations on the proposed MOA to the P&I Committee on July 31, 2026 meeting and to the full Commission on September 11, 2026. The Commission then agreed to authorize staff to proceed with the next steps in the MOA process, including working with CMCMUA to draft an agreement.

1.3 HUMAN RESOURCES

- **Recruitment:** The MIS Specialist posting closed in September, and the resume review process has begun. The Business Services Specialist position was posted, and the initial recruitment process is underway. Recruitment efforts will continue over the coming months to fill both positions.
- **Employee Benefits:** The NJ State Health Benefits Program Certifying Officer Webinar was held in September in preparation for the upcoming health benefits enrollment period. Open Enrollment for employees will begin on October 1, 2026.
- **Training:** Staff attended the September Agency Training Coordinator Meeting, which provided updates, training information, and the opportunity to connect with other state agency coordinators. CLIP provides training, technical assistance, and resources to support agency and staff development.

2 INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

- **Interagency Council on Climate Resilience (IAC):** Commission staff attended the September 8, 2026 meeting of the IAC. Staff heard presentations from the State Climatologist and received updates on various state agency programs related to hazard mitigation. The IAC has requested content submissions for inclusion in its 2026 annual report by October 30th. Staff will prepare and submit materials by the deadline.
- **Pinelands Native Plant Seed Mix Project:** The working group tasked with development lists of native Pinelands seed mixes is set to hold its second meeting on October 8, 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

3 LAND USE PROGRAMS

3.1 CONFORMANCE ACTIVITY

	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
Master Plans/Ordinances Received		
Adopted	15	144
Drafted or Introduced	5	69
Total ¹	11	162
Substantial Issue Finding ²	0	6
No Substantial Issue Finding	7	103
No Issue Finding	1	20
Total	8	129
Finding Letters Issued³	6	75

Notable Activity:

- **Data Center Ordinances:** As of the end of September, the Commission had reviewed ordinances from eleven municipalities prohibiting data centers and one municipality enacting a six-month moratorium on 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 Bass River Township, Galloway Township, Jackson Township, Upper Township and Washington Township that were reviewed during September. Similar ordinances adopted by four additional municipalities, Manchester Township, Medford Township, Plumsted Township, and Stafford Township, are currently pending Commission review. Staff is also aware of a similar ordinance introduced by New Hanover Township, which is pending final adoption.

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.

3.2 CULTURAL RESOURCE ACTIVITY

Activity	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
Applications Reviewed	16	89
Surveys Required	1	5
Surveys Reviewed	2	14
Certificates of Appropriateness Required	0	1

Notable Activity:

- Fenwick Manor Rehabilitation:** New concrete foundation piers with helical piles have been installed underneath both of Fenwick Manor's front chimneys. The ongoing rehabilitation efforts include window repair and exterior prep and painting. Next month work will continue with brick mortar repairs, exterior carpentry repairs, installation of new roof shingles, and replacement of flooring that was demolished during foundation repairs.

3.3 PINELANDS DEVELOPMENT CREDIT (PDC) PROGRAM

Activity	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
PDCs Allocated ⁴	0	20.29
PDCs Severed ⁵	0	7.75
Acres Protected	0	252.77
PDCs Extinguished ⁶	0	8.50
Acres Protected	0	204.68
PDCs Sold	0.50	29.75
Average Sales Price per PDC	\$100,000	\$99,445
Average Sales Price per right	\$25,000	\$24,861
PDCs Redeemed ⁷	1.75	24.25

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.

Notable Activity:

- **Redemptions:** In September, 1.50 PDCs (six rights) were redeemed for a project in Jackson Township's Regional Growth Area that includes 19 single family homes and four affordable apartments. Another 0.25 PDCs were redeemed for development of a single family detached home on an undersized lot in Monroe Township's Regional Growth Area.
- **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.

3.4 SPECIAL PROJECTS

- **Pinelands Infrastructure Trust Fund (PITF):** Since the August 26, 2026 release of a Request for Proposals to solicit infrastructure project applications for funding, several municipalities have contacted staff to discuss project eligibility. Local government and utility authorities with jurisdiction over the project are eligible to apply for funding of water supply or wastewater projects that will serve development in the Regional Growth Area. The deadline for project proposals is January 11, 2027. Projects will be evaluated against the criteria set by the Commission in the amended Pinelands Infrastructure Master Plan. A new list of priority projects for a combination of loans and grants totaling approximately \$13 million will be selected from among the proposals and will be prioritized in a future Infrastructure Master Plan amendment.

4 REGULATORY PROGRAMS

4.1 APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Activity	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
Pre-Application Conferences	2	32
Certificates of Filing	23	193
Public Development Reports	3	23
NJDEP/PC Forestry Application Complete	0	2
PDC Letters of Interpretation	0	15
Non-PDC Letters of Interpretation	0	0
MOA Consistency Determinations	0	39
Review of Agency Determinations	66	522

4.2 NOTABLE APPLICATIONS

- **Residential Subdivision, Tabernacle Township (Applicant: A&E Real Estate Solutions, App. No 1993-0010.004):** Application for thirteen lot residential subdivision and the construction of eleven single family dwellings off Carranza Road.

Property Details

- 20.08-acre parcel
- Pinelands Village
- Serviced by nitrogen-reducing alternate design septic systems

Background

1/2024:	Previous development application (App. No. 1993-0010.002) received for a municipal complex on the parcel; Application never completed
6/2025:	Application received for 13-lot residential subdivision and 11 single family dwellings on same parcel
12/19/2025:	Application completed; Certificate of Filing issued for residential subdivision
3/19/2026:	Staff issued letter asking for additional information necessary to review the preliminary approval issued by Burlington County Planning Board for the proposed development
7/16/2026:	Staff issued letter indicating that the subdivision approvals issued by Burlington County Planning Board & the Tabernacle Township Land Development Board raised issues with the CMP, including groundwater quality (septic dilution) standards

Updates	
9/24/2026:	Staff issued letter indicating that the preliminary and final subdivision approvals issued by the Burlington County Planning Board and the Tabernacle Township Land Development Board could take effect. As part of the application, the applicant recorded deed restrictions on the parcel to ensure that the development meets groundwater quality (septic dilution) standards.

- **Establishment of three commercial uses without application, Town of Hammonton (Property Owner: Hreha, Ref. No. 1994-0361.002):**

Property Details

- 10.04-acre parcel
- Agricultural Production Area
- Existing single family dwelling serviced by existing onsite septic system
- Three commercial uses established in existing buildings; commercial driveway and parking area constructed
- Portions of development located in wetlands and required 200 foot wetland buffer.

Background

4/2022-Present: Staff and applicant exchanged correspondence regarding the information necessary to address the violation. The three uses are not permitted in the Town's AP Zoning District. Our letters provided guidance regarding the removal of the three uses and the restoration of the wetlands/wetland buffer to address the violation.

6/3 & 7/26/2026: Staff inspected the parcel with Town officials

6/4 & 7/9/2026: Staff attended municipal court hearings

Updates	
9/10/2026:	Municipal court hearing: property owner pled guilty, was fined and given 60 days to remove the uses and restore the site

- **Demolition of four structures, 50 years old or older and the construction of a 73,629 square foot commercial building (warehouse/office) on Juliustown Road, Pemberton Township (Applicant: Hamilton Realty Investment Group, App. No. 1999-0131.003):**

Property Details

- 7.35-acre parcel
- Regional Growth Area
- Outstanding commercial expansion violation on parcel (expansion of commercial storage yard, potential expansion onto neighboring parcels)
- Identified historic cultural resources on parcel

Background

8/2005-5/2021: Commission issued correspondence advising property owner(s) of commercial expansion violation

7/2026: Application submitted for proposed demolition of four structures and construction of commercial warehouse/office building

Updates	
9/25/2026:	Staff issued letter advising of additional information necessary to complete application & address outstanding violation

- **Addition to Existing Building on Sooy Place Road, Woodland Township (Property Owner: Kozak, App. No. 2023-0167.001):**

Property Details

- 1.3-acre parcel
- Pinelands Preservation Area District
- Existing unidentified building on parcel
- Tax information indicates building is "residential"

Background

7/2026- present: Staff received reports and inquiries and exchanged correspondence with County Health Department and municipal officials regarding the construction of an addition to an existing unidentified building on the parcel

Updates	
9/24/2026:	Staff issued a letter to the property owner and agency officials advising the following: • The replacement of an existing septic system does not require application to the Commission; • If the Township determines that the existing building is a single family dwelling, the construction of an addition to the dwelling does not require application to the Commission; and • If the Township determines that the existing building is not a single family dwelling, the proposed addition may require completion of an application to the Commission depending on certain criteria.

- **Installation of Six Irrigation Wells & Increase in Water Allocation, Manchester Township (Applicant: Riverpointe Homeowners Association, App. No. 1982-2731.013):**

Property Details

- 68.39-acre parcel
- Regional Growth Area
- Existing residential development
- Six wells installed prior to completion of an application with the Commission

Background

12/20/2023:	Certificate of Filing for “after-the-fact” installation of six irrigation wells and water allocation from six wells and two surface water bodies. The application requests a water allocation of 41.5 million gallons per year from the six wells and two surface water bodies.
2023:	Amendments to CMP require additional standards be addressed for wells/water allocations exceeding 50,000 gallons per day in the Kirkwood Cohansey Aquifer
2023-present:	Staff and applicant exchanged correspondence regarding the information required to address the CMP groundwater quality standards for water allocations exceeding 50,000 gallons per day in the Kirkwood Cohansey Aquifer, including additional analysis and hydrologic models
7/13/2026:	Commission staff sent an email to the applicant requesting the submission of additional information to meet CMP water management standards per guidance from United States Geological Survey (USGS)

Updates	
9/15/2026:	Commission staff met with the applicant, State Assemblymen Gregory Myhre and Brian Rumpf, Senator Carmen Amato, Jr. and the Senator's Chief of Staff. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the additional information necessary to demonstrate that the proposed development meets the water management standards of the CMP. The applicant indicated they were attempting to retain a new consultant to address the information outlined in the Commission staff's 7/13/26 email.

4.3 OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

- US Fish and Wildlife Bat Seminar (USFWS) and Training on Transportation Structures:** On September 21 and 24, 2026, Regulatory Programs staff member, Bethany Williams, attended a bat training seminar hosted by USFWS. The seminar provided biological background and training for survey requirements on conducting field assessments for the bat species located in New Jersey. The training included multiple field site observations of guano, and big brown bats actively located on NJ bridges, plus demonstrations of acoustic detection equipment that identified bat species and behaviors through their distinctive call patterns during an evening emergence survey.



Above: Pinelands Commission Regulatory Programs staff participated in a bat training seminar hosted by the USFWS on September 21 and 24, 2026.

- Rutgers Wetland Delineation Certificate Program Training:** Regulatory Programs newest staff member, Gina Fernandes, completed the last of the Rutgers Wetland Certificate Program training series courses, Methodology for Delineating Wetlands, on September 29 and 30, 2026. During the two-day field session, students worked as a group to establish wetlands boundaries based on soils analysis and vegetation identification. Ms. Fernandes previously completed other training series courses: Hydric Soils (July 28-30) and Vegetation Identification for Wetland Delineation: South (August 26 & 27), which focused on wetland vegetation found in southern New Jersey. She will be completing the final exam to earn the Rutgers Wetlands Delineation Certificate.

4.4 OFF-ROAD VEHICLE EVENT APPROVALS

- **Application # 2005-0459.044**
Meteor Motorcycle Club
Approval Issued: 9/16/2026
Event Name: Fall Brawl Hare Scramble
Event Date: September 26 & 27, 2026
Municipality: Maurice River Township
Lands Utilized: Ormond Farms located on Hesstown Road
Route Length: 12 miles

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. Five of the 30 ponds contained water in September. Water level data was downloaded from one of the seven ponds that contain automatic water level recorders.
- **Rare Snake Monitoring:** In September, the science staff captured, processed, and released 38 adult snakes, including 21 corn snakes, 13 pine snakes, 2 rough green snakes, and 2 timber rattlesnakes found within study areas. The remaining clutches of eggs that had been incubating in the lab since July hatched, bringing the non-venomous hatchling count to 159 (51 corn snake and 108 pine snake hatchlings). After the hatchlings shed their skin, they were weighed, measured, sexed, PIT tagged, and released. Staff implanted three pine snakes with radio-transmitters and removed transmitters from two corn snakes, retiring them from the study. Surgeries have concluded for 2026 as snakes will begin returning to their hibernacula and preparing for brumation (i.e., hibernation in reptiles).



Above: One of the rough green snakes found during September tracking. The coloration allows this species to blend in perfectly with vegetation and they are most visible during the spring and fall when they are actively moving to and from their hibernacula.



Above: A timber rattlesnake gestation tank. Mom is on top of a hide box on the left and neonates are visible on the right.

- The final lab gestating timber rattlesnake gave birth in early September, bringing the venomous neonate total to 73 for the season. Radio-transmitters were attached externally to eight adult females, including two that were not suspected to be gravid upon capture. All neonates were weighed, measured, sexed, tagged with Passive Integrated Transponders (PIT), and returned with their mothers to their capture locations. Tracking has begun and will continue as females begin moving toward their hibernacula.



Left: An external transmitter attached to the tail of one of the tracked female rattlesnakes. **Right:** A partially submerged female tracked to an abandoned cranberry bog.

5.2 LONG TERM STUDIES

- **Box Turtle Study:** Staff swapped radio transmitters and iButton temperature loggers on 40 tracked turtles, in advance of brumation. One new turtle was found and added to the study and three turtles were taken to rehab for the treatment of severe ear infections. Solar powered GPS units were attached to a few turtles to evaluate the efficiency of this new technology. If testing goes well, they may replace the rechargeable model that the team currently uses.



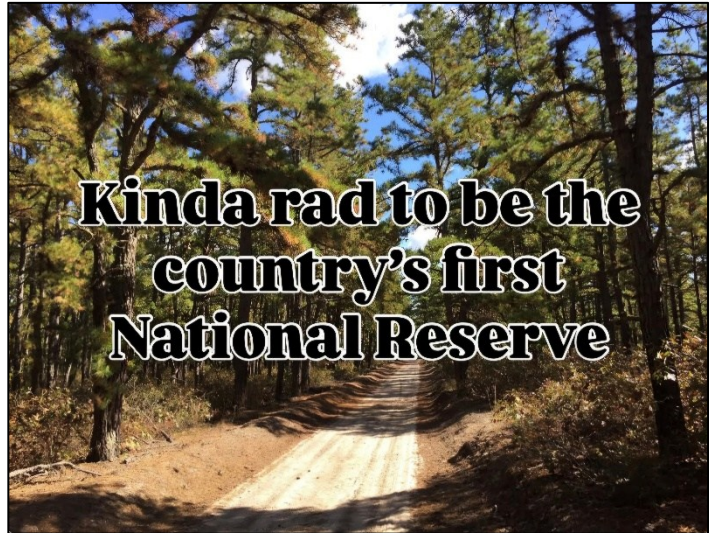
Above: A box turtle with a solar powered GPS unit.

- **Snake Fungal Disease (SFD) Monitoring:** Science staff began collecting end of season swabs from radio-tracked corn and pine snakes and continued to swab new snakes and neonates. The swabs will be sent to collaborators at Virginia Tech to better understand the disease.

6 COMMUNICATIONS

6.1 COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLICATIONS

- **Inquiries/Correspondence:** The Communications Office received and responded to approximately 65 inquiries from the public in September, including phone calls, e-mails, and media inquiries.
- **Website:** Commission staff made routine edits to the website in September. Additionally, Commission staff members discussed plans to redesign the agency's website during a meeting with the New Jersey Office of Information Technology (OIT) on September 4, 2026. OIT staff answered questions about the project during the meeting and noted that there would be no cost to undertake the redesign. Commission staff has been asked to review the existing website and recommend changes or enhancements by the end of October. From there, staff will compile the recommended changes and work with OIT on the project.
- **Social Media:** In September, staff shared 280 photos and four videos on the Commission's Instagram site, 48 posts on X, and 51 posts on Bluesky. One video of a native northern pine snake climbing a tree has garnered more than 307,000 views, over 15,000 likes, over 11,000 shares, over 460 comments, and over 1,100 new



Above: The Commission shared 280 photos on Instagram in September, including a series of 19 slides highlighting why the Pinelands National Reserve is "rad." The post has garnered over 44,000 views, 3,300 likes, 63 comments, and 510 shares.



Above: The Commission shared 51 photos on Bluesky in September, including this photo of a native, globally rare Pine Barren gentian in bloom.

followers. Commission Scientist Christine Healy recorded the video. The Commission's content (photos and videos) generated a record of more than 560,000 views on Instagram while adding a record 2,400 followers for the month and 1,525 views (for a watch time of 189 hours) on YouTube in September. Ten of the Commission's photos were featured on other sites in Instagram in September.

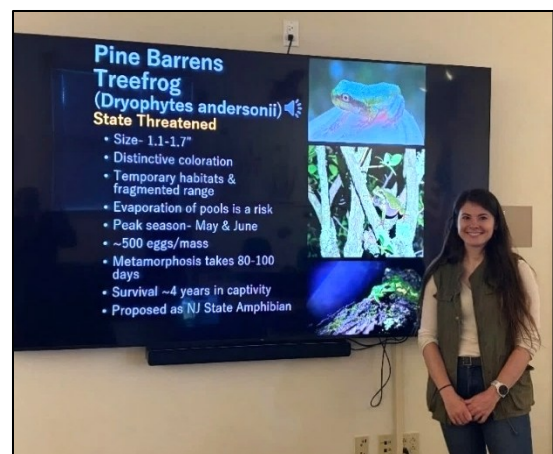
- **Pinelands National Reserve Wall Calendar:** Throughout September, staff compiled, categorized, and vetted the resolution of hundreds of photos that will be considered for use in the 2027 Pinelands National Reserve wall calendar. Staff also reviewed and edited the draft grids for each month. The calendar is funded by the National Park Service. The 2027 calendar will focus on trees and all that rely on them, such as humans, birds, turtles, snakes, squirrels, insects, beavers, and other wildlife. It will also highlight forests and a variety of tree species that can be found growing in the Pinelands. The calendar will be designed, edited, and printed in November and will be distributed free-of-charge at numerous sites in the Pinelands by early December.



Above: The 2027 Pinelands National Reserve wall calendar will focus on trees and all that rely on them, such as this red-bellied woodpecker that is foraging on a native black oak.

6.2 EVENTS, OUTREACH & INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS

- **Pinelands Speaker Series:** More than 40 people attended the fifth and final presentation of this year's Pinelands Speaker Series at the Commission's headquarters on September 3, 2026. Presenter Christine Healy, a Commission Research Scientist, discussed frog diversity and the incredible adaptations frogs have developed around the world. Attendees also learned about the remarkable transformation from tadpole to adult frog, tackled the "frog vs. toad" question, and met the species that call New Jersey home. Starting in mid-June, the Commission hosted talks on tick biology, ecology, and control, as well as programs on the unique species of *Triantha* endemic to New Jersey, owls of New Jersey, and Eastern box turtles. A total of approximately 200 people attended the free



Above: Christine Healy, a Commission Research Scientist, discussed frog diversity and adaptation during a presentation at the Commission's office on September 3, 2026.

presentations.

- **Pinelands-themed World Water Monitoring Challenge:** Staff continued to plan and coordinate this year's event, which will be held at Batsto Lake on October 23, 2026.
- **Education Programs:** Joel Mott, the Commission's Principal Public Programs Specialist, delivered presentations for the Haddonfield Garden Club on September 8th. He also led three nature walks as part of the Bog Bash at the Pinelands Regional High School on September 18th. Lastly, he delivered a presentation at the Little Egg Harbor Community Center on September 30th. In total, more than 400 people were educated during the programs.
- **Pinelands Short Course:** Staff continued to plan for the 2027 Pinelands Short Course.
- **Pinelands Merchandise:** During September, Commission staff processed eight transactions while garnering a total of \$303.20 in sales of Pinelands merchandise. An additional \$100 was donated to the fund in September. 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.

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 made significant progress in reworking the PCIS dashboard reports utilized by Regulatory Programs to make them useful prior to the release of the new Pinelands Application Information System (PAIS). These reports provide critical information about deadlines, workload, and any overdue items being worked on by the Regulatory Programs staff. Staff highlighted the progress which had been made on the PAIS system and agreed to meet again in a month due to the significant work already accomplished. By that time, the Information Systems staff anticipate being done with the final five modules being migrated from PCIS. Staff also provided ad hoc reporting to highlight failed online payments for development application fees.
- **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). The state emphasized the need for all agencies to continue phasing out older technologies and adopting the best practices advocated by NJCCIC, such as the Yubikey authentication the Pinelands began using for administrators over the summer. Staff performed their regular annual update for all Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) certificates on Pinelands servers.
- **Geographic Information Systems (GIS):** Staff participated in the New Jersey Geospatial Forum monthly meeting to facilitate GIS collaboration with other state agencies. The relevant topics of

discussion continued to be providers of aerial imagery and analysis. The group also asked our staff to participate directly in the parcel management project. Staff participated in a conference call with NearMap along with staff from Regulatory Programs to discuss the available features and pricing of different aerial photography and analysis packages. In addition, staff discussed different ways LiDAR was being utilized to see if in-house development of models for land use review could be beneficial. Staff have made significant progress in improving the accuracy of mapping applications based upon parcel data, which will be piloted in the next few months and integrated with PAIS development.

- **Technology Enhancements:** Staff reviewed the WiFi Access Points mapping provided by the New Jersey Office of Information Technology and began to evaluate building locations and available wiring for placement and installation of the devices. Staff attended the biweekly Microsoft Copilot Artificial Intelligence working group and discussed results from initial model testing using the Microsoft “Agent Studio.” Staff supported the DataPointe online payment system to assist users with migrating to multifactor authentication. Staff were notified by the New Jersey Office of Telecommunications that there were several Pinelands Commission fax lines that appeared to be dormant. The Commission has migrated most of its services to new online processes and a review is being done to determine which lines can be disconnected.
- **Recruitment:** Over the last month, Staff has been working with Human Resources to fill a vacancy for a Management Information Systems Specialist 4. The opening was posted on August 28, 2026, and the office is currently reviewing resumes.

8 BUSINESS OFFICE

8.1 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- **Application Fees:** September 2026, Net Total: \$148,897.91, Fiscal Year to Date Total: \$298,492.84. This equates to 37.31% of the Fiscal Year 2027 anticipated fee revenue of \$800,000. The net total for September includes 27 online application payments totaling \$66,996.70.
- The Commission’s Business Services staff and the accountants from Holman, Frenia, Allison, PC., have begun preparing for the FY 2023 Audit.
- The contract with Primepoint for Payroll, Time & Attendance and Human Resource Management Services has been drafted and is under review and discussion with representatives of Primepoint.

8.2 FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

- Routine inspections by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Fire Marshall and the DCA Elevator Inspector identified two issues with the elevator in the RJS building that will need to be addressed. Staff is waiting for the elevator maintenance contractor to provide a quote related to removal of sludge in a cylinder. In addition, cracks in the elevator shaft have been identified and staff is seeking a quote for that work as well.

- During an inspection of the RJS building, the Fire Marshall identified emergency lighting violations. The lights in question are original to the building. Staff is working to get an electrical contractor on-site to correct the deficiencies.



Above: Native eastern showy asters began blooming in the Commission's rain garden in September.

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>A3966/S4400</u>	Karabinchak, Bhalla, Collazos-Gill/Diegnan, Beach	Requires NJDEP 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 financial impacts of data center development in the State	Assembly Bill: Introduced and referred to Telecommunications and Utilities Committee on 5/7/2026 Senate Bill: Introduced and referred to Environment and Energy Committee on 6/4/2026

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>
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: Passed by the Assembly on 9/24/26; Received by the Senate and referred to the Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism, and Historic Preservation Committee. 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

