



NEW JERSEY PINELANDS COMMISSION

MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT



The Atsion Mansion in Wharton State Forest in March

MARCH 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 EXECUTIVE OFFICE	1
1.1 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
1.1A COMMITTEE MEETINGS	1
1.1B PINELANDS MUNICIPAL COUNCIL	1
1.1C RULEMAKING	1
1.1D OPEN PUBLIC RECORDS ACT	2
2 INTERAGENCY COORDINATION	2
3 PLANNING	2
3.1 CONFORMANCE ACTIVITY	2
3.2 CULTURAL RESOURCE ACTIVITY	3
3.3 PINELANDS DEVELOPMENT CREDIT PROGRAM	3
3.4 SPECIAL PROJECTS	4
3.5 OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST	4
4 REGULATORY PROGRAMS	5
4.1 APPLICATION ACTIVITY	5
4.2 NOTABLE APPLICATIONS	5
4.3 OFF-ROAD VEHICLE EVENT ROUTE MAP APPROVALS	6
5 SCIENCE	7
5.1 ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING	7
5.2 LONG TERM STUDIES	7
6 COMMUNICATIONS	8
6.1 COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLICATIONS	8
6.2 EVENTS, OUTREACH, INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS	8
7 INFORMATION SYSTEMS	9
8 BUSINESS OFFICE	10
8.1 FACILITIES	10
8.2 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	10

1 EXECUTIVE OFFICE

1.1 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

1.1A COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- The LUCIS Committee met on March 17, 2021 and received presentations on forest management from Leslie Sauer, author, founder of Andropogon Associates and founding board member of the Northeast Region of the Society for Ecological Restoration, and John Cecil, Vice President for Stewardship, NJ Audubon Society. The Committee also discussed and suggested revised priorities for a new round of land acquisition using the Pinelands Conservation Fund. Finally, the Committee discussed the possibility of changing its name to the Climate Action Committee.
- The CMP Policy & Implementation Committee met on March 26, 2021 and discussed Barnegat Township Ordinance 2021-4 and the Executive Director's recommendation for certification. No vote was taken, and staff agreed to gather additional information from the Township to address the concerns that were raised. The Committee received a presentation on the 2021 round of land acquisition under the Pinelands Conservation Fund, focusing on grassland habitat and carbon sequestration. The Committee endorsed the schedule and the matrix to be used for evaluating project applications. The Committee reviewed the updated draft Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) stormwater management amendments and continued its discussion of application exemptions.

1.1B PINELANDS MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

- The Pinelands Municipal Council met by conference call on March 9, 2021. The Installation of the 2021 Executive Committee was done by Senator Michael Testa, Jr. Senator Testa joined in a conversation regarding Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) funding for Pinelands municipalities. He advised that the towns should engage in the upcoming budget hearings and show their support. The Pinelands Commission Executive Director reported on the upcoming Orientation for Newly Elected Officials, the Pine Barrens Byway and the Pinelands Short Course and answered questions.

1.1C RULEMAKING

- Following discussion of the draft stormwater management CMP amendments with the Policy & Implementation Committee in February, staff made a series of clarifications and revisions, particularly to the proposed requirements for variances, exceptions and off-site mitigation. Revised amendments were distributed and discussed at the Committee's March 26, 2021 meeting. The draft amendments will next be forwarded to the Governor's office for approval, after which a full rule proposal will be presented to the Commission for authorization.

1.1D OPEN PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

- A total of 11 Open Public Records Act (OPRA) requests were received in March. Of the 11 requests, seven were provided responsive material, three were advised that their requests did not identify specific government records in accordance with OPRA requirements, and one required clarification from the requestor.

2 INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

- **Highlands Council:** Staff held a conference call with Highlands Council staff on the Commission’s septic pilot program.

3 PLANNING

3.1 CONFORMANCE ACTIVITY

	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
Ordinances/Master Plans Received	17	37

Notable Activity:

- **Bass River Township** – Staff reviewed a draft zoning map from Bass River Township. The Township is considering the designation of infill areas within its Preservation Area District as well as other zoning changes in the Pinelands National Reserve portion of the Township. Staff is in the process of scheduling a meeting with the Township to discuss these amendments.
- **South Toms River Borough** – Staff reviewed two redevelopment plan amendments intended to implement a settlement agreement between the Borough and Fair Share Housing Center. The amendments provide for the development of a 30-unit, 100% affordable housing project within the Borough’s existing Landfill Redevelopment Area, which is located within a Regional Growth Area. Other permitted uses in the Landfill Redevelopment Area would be revised and limited to solar energy facilities. Staff has identified inconsistencies with the plans as they relate to the standards of the CMP, and will be working with the Borough to amend these plans.
- **Southampton Township** – Staff reviewed a draft redevelopment plan for the Red Lion Diner Redevelopment Area. Staff provided feedback on the draft plan and met

with Township officials and representatives of the redeveloper to discuss details of the plan and the environmental constraints of the site.

- **Stormwater ordinances** – Pinelands municipalities with lands outside of the Pinelands Area were required to amend their ordinances by March 2, 2021 to conform with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s (NJDEP) updated stormwater management regulations. Staff has been monitoring these ordinances to ensure that such amendments do not impact stormwater regulations applicable to the Pinelands Area. As of the end of March, approximately 27 of 42 such municipalities have amended their stormwater control ordinances. None of the ordinances have been found to impact Pinelands Area stormwater provisions.

3.2 CULTURAL RESOURCE ACTIVITY

Activity	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
Applications Reviewed	10	24
Surveys Required	0	2
Surveys Reviewed	0	0
Certificates of Appropriateness Required	1	2

3.3 PINELANDS DEVELOPMENT CREDIT PROGRAM

Activity	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
PDCs Allocated	1.35	2.10
PDCs Severed	0	0
Acres Protected	0	0
PDCs Extinguished	0	0
Acres Protected	0	0
PDCs Sold	0.75	5.75
Average Sales Price per PDC	\$66,668	\$58,556
Average Sales Price per Right	\$16,667	\$14,639
PDCs Redeemed	0	0.50

Notable Activity:

- **PDC Allocations:** A total of 1.35 PDCs were allocated in March 2021 to 100 acres in the Preservation Area District and 15 acres in the Agricultural Production Area, all located in and owned by Galloway Township.
- **PDC Sales:** March 2021 sales prices ranged from \$15,000 -\$20,000 per right (0.25 PDC).

3.4 SPECIAL PROJECTS

- **Kirkwood-Cohansey:** Work continues to focus on possible methods of implementing the procedures and requirements being proposed in the draft rules. Staff discussed a potential review framework for new well and increased diversion applications. The New Jersey Water Supply Advisory Council has requested a presentation about the planned rule changes at an upcoming meeting.
- **Pine Barrens Byway:** Staff began to explore the possibility of using a QR code as a tool to connect the public to the ESRI Story Map previously developed. The QR code could be posted on the Commission's website and in the Candace McKee Ashmun Pinelands Exhibit area.
- **Winslow Township – Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):** As required by the MOU, Winslow Township submitted its annual report to the Commission for review. Consideration of the reported withdrawals, along with unreported withdrawals for irrigation wells, against the limits outlined in the MOU is underway.
- **National Park Service Long-Term Monitoring Agreement:** A work plan and budget for Federal Fiscal Year 2021 was prepared for submittal to the National Park Service (NPS) as part of the Commission's annual agreement modification.
- **Permanent Land Protection Database:** Planning staff worked with the Information Systems office to continue development of the database, but also to outline an amended timeframe to be included in the NPS work plan.

3.5 OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

- **Southern Barnegat Bay Watershed Protection Plan (SBBWPP) –** Staff participated (virtually) in the kick-off meeting of the SBBWPP-Watershed Restoration Team. The Southern Barnegat Bay Watershed is comprised primarily of lands in Barnegat, Stafford, Eagleswood, Little Egg Harbor, Tuckerton and Bass River. The watershed restoration project is being funded by a \$775K grant from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). The project team aims to identify major problem areas contributing to the decline in water quality in the Bay, to identify management strategies to address stormwater runoff and non-point source pollution and to oversee the installation of "green" infrastructure projects and retrofits in priority locations.
- Staff made a virtual presentation on the Brotherton Reservation as part of the Whitesbog Preservation Trust's Winter Speaker Series.

4 REGULATORY PROGRAMS

4.1 APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Activity	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
Pre-Application Conferences	21	39
Certificates of Filing	25	45
Public Development Reports	1	3
Forestry Certificates of Filing	0	2
PDC Letters of Interpretation	4	7
Non-PDC Letters of Interpretation	0	0
MOA Consistency Determinations	8	9
Review of Agency Determinations	109	268

4.2 NOTABLE APPLICATIONS

- **Mullica Board of Education (BOE) Septic System Replacement (App. No. 1993-0802.004):** On March 3, 2021, the Commission staff conducted a pre-application conference regarding the proposed replacement of an existing onsite wastewater treatment plant that services the existing Mullica Township public school in the Elwood area of Mullica Township. The existing onsite wastewater treatment plant was required in a 1994 Pinelands Commission approval to accommodate a proposed addition to the school. The Board of Education is proposing the replacement of the treatment system, but not the onsite wastewater disposal field. The Commission staff advised the consultant for the BOE that the repair or replacement of an existing onsite wastewater disposal system did not require application to the Commission.
- **Atlantic City Electric (App. No. 2015-0014.001):** On March 5, 2021, the Commission staff issued a Certificate of Filing for the proposed replacement of 122 wooden poles with 54 steel monopoles in Bass River Township and the City of Port Republic. The existing wooden poles are between 45 and 55 feet tall. The proposed steel monopoles are between 50 and 100 feet in height.
- **Barnegat Crossing forest fire fuel break (App No. 1985-1432.010):** On March 5, 2021, the Commission staff issued a letter to an applicant regarding a proposed forest fire fuel break. The concerned application for 148 dwelling units within four proposed, three-story buildings was approved by the Barnegat Township Planning Board. The proposed development is required to provide a 200-foot perimeter forest fire fuel break. The application proposes an approximately 50-foot forest fire fuel break. The Commission staff letter asked the Township Planning Board or its authorized representatives to provide the specific findings and a specific

determination that the proposed 50-foot forest fire fuel break was adequate to protect life and property.

- **Proposed cell tower in Pemberton Township (App. No. 1984-1323.008):** By letter dated March 11, 2021, the Commission staff responded to an application proposing a cell tower on the south side of Route 70 in the Township. The applicant represented that the tower was being proposed in association with the Burlington County Public Safety Radio System. In 2012, the Commission adopted a Comprehensive Public Safety Tower Plan to identify general locations for the placement of new public safety towers in the Pinelands Area that meet the coverage needs and requirements of public safety first responders and to minimize the number and impact of these towers. The plan participants included Burlington County. The Commission staff letter indicated that the Pinelands Development Credits allocated to the 96-acre parcel subject of the application had been severed and a PDC deed restriction imposed on the parcel. The PDC deed restriction prohibited the development of a cell tower on the parcel. In addition, the letter advised that a cell tower application must be filed on or behalf of one of the plan participants.
- **Hamilton Bears Head Road (App. No 1981-0755.011):** On March 24, 2021, the Commission staff issued a Certificate of Filing for 55 proposed single family dwellings on a 436.5 acre parcel in Hamilton Township. Since the parcel is located in a Pinelands Forest Area, the proposed dwellings are clustered on 55 approximately one-acre lots.
- **Renault Winery, Galloway Township. (App. No. 1996-1407.013):** The Commission staff issued a letter to the current owners of Renault Winery regarding development that had occurred on the parcel without application to the Commission. That development included a 7,800-square-foot concrete patio/pavilion, a 464-square-foot food preparation building and a 360-square-foot bathroom building. Additional development that occurred on the parcel without application to the Commission included a themed event area with numerous event tent-like structures, approximately five to 10 wooden sheds and an ice rink. Some of the development may have occurred in the required buffer to wetlands. The Commission staff letter identified the information that must be submitted to complete the application.

4.3 OFF-ROAD VEHICLE EVENT ROUTE MAP APPROVALS

- **Application # 1988-0757.066**
Tri-County Sportsmen Motorcycle Club, Inc.
Approval Issued: 3/12/2021
Event Name: Greenbrier Enduro
Event Date: March 14, 2021
Municipality: Dennis Township, Maurice River Township, Upper Township
Lands Utilized: US Silica, Maurice River Township
Route Length: 51 miles

5 SCIENCE

5.1 ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

- **Water Level Monitoring:** In March, staff measured water levels at forest plots and ponds in the Commission network of long-term monitoring sites. This work is completed each month.
- **Annual Frog and Toad Monitoring:**
Staff completed the March daytime and nighttime calling frog surveys for a group of ponds that have been surveyed annually since the early 1990s. One of the goals of this project is to investigate long-term changes in the occurrence and abundance of calling frogs at these sites. Staff continued to learn how to use Occupancy Models and the statistical program called R to analyze long-term trends in calling frogs at this group of sites. Wildlife is rarely detected with perfect accuracy so the presence or absence of a species at a site is dependent upon its detectability. For example, not hearing a frog at a site during a survey could mean that it is absent or present, but not detectable, on that particular night. Occupancy Models incorporate the detectability of a species to more accurately determine the presence or abundance of that species at a site over time.

5.2 LONG TERM STUDIES

- **Joint Corn Snake Study, Kingsnake Study, and Rare Snake Monitoring:** Specific telemetry data and snake capture data from 2020 were submitted to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to satisfy annual permit requirements. Because the field work is nearly year-round for these projects, a temporary permit has been issued until the formal permit arrives. Requests have been made to the NJDEP Division of Parks and Forestry for a permit letter and the Division of Fish and Wildlife for a Special Use Permit to continue conducting research on State Forest land and Wildlife Management Areas, respectively. Requests to build corrals around new dens, place additional cover to capture snakes, and add pitfall traps to the drift fence have been approved by the NJDEP. Commission and Herpetological Associates (HA) staff built corrals around all new dens, began to place cover in new areas, and will be installing pitfall traps along the drift fence in April.
- **Snake Fungal Disease Monitoring:** The Commission is collaborating with Herpetological Associates (HA) and Rutgers University on their long-term snake research where a series of pine snake dens are excavated each winter to assess the hibernating snakes. For the past few years, snakes have also been sampled for evidence of snake fungal disease. In March, Rutgers, HA, Commission, New Jersey Conservation Foundation, and Pinelands Preservation Alliance staff excavated the dens, measured and weighed the snakes, and sampled each snake for fungal disease.

6 COMMUNICATIONS

6.1 COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLICATIONS

- The Pinelands Commission’s website was viewed 16,157 times in March 2021.
- **Inquiries/Correspondence:** The Communications/Public Programs Office received and responded to 197 inquiries from the public, including phone calls, e-mails, and media inquiries.
- **2020 Annual Report:** The Communications Office finalized the report in early March, and the Commission adopted a resolution to accept the report during its March 12th meeting. It has since been posted on the Commission’s website.



Above: Communications Office staff finalized the 2020 Annual Report in early March 2020, and the Commission voted to accept the report on March 12th.

6.2 EVENTS, OUTREACH & INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS

- **Pinelands Speaker Series Webinars:** Staff hosted four webinars as part of the Pinelands Speaker Series in March 2021. The webinars included “LANDFIRE: A Landscape-level Resource for Fire Management and Habitat Assessments in the Pinelands,” “A Tale of Two Pine Barrens: Central Pine Barrens of Long Island and the Pinelands of New Jersey,” “Live and Let Live: Ecology and Evolutionary Physiology of Eastern Fence Lizards,” and “Today’s Ecological Forestry.” The four webinars have generated more than 550 views thus far. On March 23rd, staff announced the lineup of webinars through April. Additional webinars are being arranged for May.
- **Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan:** The Commission continued its celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) throughout March 2021. The Commission is marking the milestone by composing and sharing daily posts on its Facebook and Instagram sites and via e-mails on its Pinelands News Alert mailing list, which reaches more than 1,400 recipients. In March, the Commission wrote and shared 29 anniversary-related posts, including 198 photos and six videos. The posts highlight native species that benefit from Pinelands protection, cultural resource surveys, the work of the Regulatory Programs Office, the Pinelands plan in action, the Pinelands Conservation Fund, the Pinelands Development Credit Program, conformance, and the Alternate Design Treatment Systems Pilot Program. More posts will be shared through the second week of April.

- **Pinelands Short Course Planning:** Staff continued to plan the spring edition of the Pinelands Short Course. Registration for the event opened in March. The event will include a virtual presentation that will be hosted by members of the Commission’s Communications Office. The virtual-only event is scheduled for April 24, 2021.

- **Social Media Site Enhancements:** Staff continued to enhance the Commission’s social media pages in March 2021. Staff posted 333 photos and six videos on the Commission’s Facebook page and Instagram site. Staff also made use of the social media sites to promote Commission meetings, webinars, the CMP anniversary celebration, the 2020 Annual Report, the Pinelands Short Course and the monthly Management report. The Commission’s Facebook page now has 7,389 followers (up 259 from February), the Instagram site has 1,356 followers (up 152 from February) and the YouTube Channel has 609 subscribers (up 46 from February).



Above: Commission staff members shared 333 photos on the agency’s social media sites in March 2021, including this photo of the Black Run Preserve in Evesham Township.

- A member of the Public Programs Office assisted the Science Office by gathering pond and well monitoring data on March 8th and 9th, and by assisting with snake studies on March 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 12th, 13th and 22nd.
- A member of the Public Programs Office led virtual field trips for the Pinelands Regional High School on March 10th, 17th and 31st.
- A member of the Public Programs Office delivered a presentation on Pinelands flora and fauna as part of the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve’s Ecological Evening Series on March 25th.

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 implemented enhancements and bug fixes to streamline operations and facilitate remote work. Staff continues to work with the New Jersey Office of Information Technology, the Treasury Department, and IBM on issues related to the archival document retrieval tool, FileNet.
- **Windows 10 and Office 365 Migration:** The Information Systems Office provides a stable and secure desktop environment. Staff continued migration of local user data

to OneDrive to replace the local file share. Staff also developed several demonstration systems to showcase the use of SharePoint and Microsoft365 for collaboration and issue tracking.

- **Pinelands Development Credit (PDC) Bank System:** The Pinelands Development Credit Bank utilizes custom software to manage all operations, including tracking data and issuing certificates. Staff worked to modernize this system to streamline the functioning of the bank. Improvements included automated Sellers List and Sales Reports, as well as new screens to handle severance events.
- **Permanent Land Protection (PLP) Data System:** The PLP system manages the data related to all the preserved land in the Pinelands National Reserve. Staff continued migration of existing PLP data into a staging database and validating records when necessary.
- **Threatened and Endangered Species System:** Staff maintains a database of threatened and endangered species sightings for internal use of the Pinelands Commission when reviewing applications. The Information Systems office continued to review results from the trial data exchange with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. Several issues were identified, and solutions are being researched.
- **Legislation Tracking System:** The Pinelands Commission stays informed of all New Jersey State Legislation relevant to its rules and regulations. Staff assisted with this by evaluating the requirements of this process and beginning the development of a new tracking system.
- **Science Field Data Collection:** The Science Office has a constant need for collecting and recording data in the field for their ongoing research projects. The Information Systems staff purchased, configured, and debugged a new rugged Android tablet to support these efforts.

8 BUSINESS OFFICE

8.1 FACILITIES

- **State Fire Inspection:** In order to be in compliance with state fire code, it was necessary to install CO² detectors in rooms adjacent to the mechanical rooms. There have been 28 CO² detectors installed throughout the facility.

8.2 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- **Application Fees:** March, Net Total: \$113,754.72; Year to Date Total: \$452,886.71 for Fiscal Year (FY)2021. The anticipated budgeted amount for FY2021 has been met and exceeded.