



# NEW JERSEY PINELANDS COMMISSION

## MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT



Native goat's rue (*Tephrosia virginiana*) blooming along a roadside in the Pinelands in June

**JUNE 2022**

# 1 EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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## 1.1 ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### 1.1A COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- **Personnel & Budget (P&B) Committee:** The Committee met on June 14, 2022. After reviewing check registers, electronic disbursements and fixed assets, the Committee voted to recommend Commission approval of a resolution authorizing FY23 expenditures at the same level as FY22 until the Commission's adoption of the FY23 budgets. Staff made a presentation on application fee revenue in FY22 and noted that FY22 application fees are more than double the budgeted amount. The Committee discussed establishing a reserve specifically for capital projects recommended in the Local Government Energy Audit reports, as well as other office improvements, hybrid vehicles and equipment related to climate change.
- **Pinelands Climate Committee:** The Committee did not meet in June.
- **Policy & Implementation (P&I) Committee:** The Committee met on June 24, 2022 and reviewed a redevelopment plan from Egg Harbor Township and a master plan, ordinance and revised zoning map from Evesham Township. The Committee recommended Commission approval of the submitted master plans and ordinances but asked that staff convey to Egg Harbor Township and any prospective redeveloper that clearing of trees should be minimized. The Committee received presentations from the staff on the work plan for the Long-Term Economic Monitoring Program and FY23 initiatives and projects.

### 1.1B RULEMAKING

- **Stormwater Management:** Staff members are nearing completion of a draft model stormwater ordinance that will be reviewed with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and then distributed to Pinelands municipalities for adoption. Distribution of the ordinance has been delayed pending NJDEP's adoption of emergency rules that may need to be incorporated in the Pinelands model stormwater ordinance.

**Water Management (Kirkwood-Cohansey):** Staff submitted the full draft rule proposal to the Governor's office for approval on May 19, 2022 and were notified that the Commission could proceed with the proposal on June 22, 2022. A resolution authorizing the proposal of Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) amendments has been listed for consideration by the Commission at its July 8, 2022 meeting.

### 1.1C OPEN PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

- A total of 18 Open Public Records Act (OPRA) requests were received in June. Ten were provided responsive material, two were advised that there was no responsive material, two were notified that the request needed to be more specific, one was advised to schedule a file review, one was not subject to disclosure and two will be responded to in July.

### 1.1D PINELANDS MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

- The Pinelands Municipal Council did not meet in June. The Council's next meeting will be held at the Commission's office on July 26<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m. as part of the annual Pinelands Orientation for Newly Elected or Appointed Officials. The Orientation will be held in-person at the Commission's headquarters and virtually via the Commission's YouTube Channel.

### 1.1E OTHER

- The Commission's office reopened to visitors, applicants, and the public on April 4, 2022. The Commission continued conducting hybrid public meetings in June. Commissioners and members of the public have the option of attending in person or participating via Zoom and YouTube.

## 1.2 LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

### 1.2A LEGISLATION

- **FY2023 Budget:** S2023, the Fiscal 2023 Budget, was passed by both Houses of the Legislature on June 29, 2022 and signed by the Governor, with line-item veto, on June 30, 2022 (P.L. 2022, c. 49.)
- **S757 – An Act Concerning Special Occasion Events on Preserved Farmland and Supplementing Title 4 of the Revised Statutes:** This bill authorizes special occasion events (wedding, lifetime milestones events, or other cultural or social events) to be conducted in whole or in part on preserved farmland on a commercial farm. Commercial farms that produce agricultural/horticultural products worth between \$10,000 annually may conduct up to 26 Special Occasion Events per calendar year, of which six may have in excess of 250 guests. Special Occasion Events held for or by a non-profit entity with fewer than 100 guests and reimbursement to the farm owner or operator does not exceed \$1,000, does not count toward the annual total of permitted events. The bill requires the owner or operator of the farm to seek permission from the grantee of the farm (the entity to which the development rights from the farm were conveyed) pursuant to the Right to Farm Act or other law enacted for farmland preservation purposes to conduct special occasions events on the preserved farmland. If the grantee fails to respond to a written request to hold special occasion events within 90 days, the request is deemed approved. The bill permits municipalities to require permits for Special Occasion Events but limits the application fee to \$50 and the information that may be requested as part of such application. The bill also prohibits the construction of permanent structures on preserved farmland for the purposes of holding Special Occasion Events and prohibits the extension of public utilities, with the exception of electricity and water lines, as well. The bill also limits the use of temporary structures to the time period between April 1<sup>st</sup> and November 30<sup>th</sup>. The Senate Bill was substituted for the Assembly bill and was passed by both houses on June 29, 2022 and sent to the Governor for his approval.
- **A4066 – Appropriates Funds to NJDEP for Environmental Infrastructure Projects for Fiscal Year 2023:** This bill authorizes NJDEP to give loans from the Pinelands Infrastructure Trust Fund to

the projects previously approved by the Commission. The bill has been passed by both houses of the Legislature.

### 1.2B STATE RULEMAKING

- **NJDEP Protection Against Climate Threats (PACT):** Staff met with NJDEP on June 6, 2022 to discuss the portions of the NJPACT rules that the Department proposed to implement through an emergency rulemaking. The emergency rules were expected to be filed on June 14, 2022. However, as a result of opposition to this emergency rulemaking, NJDEP delayed its filing. Staff has requested information from NJDEP as to when the emergency rulemaking may be filed in the future, but has not received a response, nor have staff been provided with the text of the emergency rules.

### 1.3 HUMAN RESOURCES

- **Return to Office:** In accordance with the Pinelands Commission Return to the Office plan, all staff began reporting to work at the office on a full-time basis starting January 31, 2022. Weekly COVID-19 testing of unvaccinated employees resumed April 1st. The office is open to the public, although most meetings continue to be held remotely.
- **Telework Pilot Program:** In coordination with the Civil Service Commission, the State established a pilot telework program for state employees on April 6, 2022. The pilot program will begin on July 1, 2022 and be in effect for one year. Employees will be given the option of working remotely two days each week in accordance with an extensive series of guidelines, including applications, training, surveys, and agreements. Commission staff drafted a plan to implement the pilot program, submitted it to the Governor's Authorities Unit and received approval on June 20, 2022.
- **Recruitment:** Staff completed the recruitment process for two positions. The new Management Information Specialist will begin work with the Commission on July 5, 2022 and the new Human Resources Manager will begin on July 11, 2022. Recruitment continues for a Research Scientist and second MIS Specialist.

## **2 INTERAGENCY COORDINATION**

- **Rutgers Cooperative Extension:** A landscaping contractor and staff from the Commission and the Rutgers Cooperative Extension's Water Resources Program installed a 340-square-foot rain garden in front of the Richard J. Sullivan (RJS) Center for Environmental Policy & Education on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. The contractor used a backhoe to remove and relocate three truckloads of soil, then connected a gutter downspout from the RJS building into the garden and installed an underground, overflow drain. The garden was then filled with bioretention soil (a mix of compost and sand) and approximately 1.5 tons of stone. The group planted 70 native Pinelands plants and applied about five yards of mulch. The rain garden will capture, treat, and infiltrate stormwater runoff from the RJS building and provide habitat for birds, butterflies, bees, and other wildlife. It will also serve as a demonstration garden for the public and applicants. The garden includes a newly installed sign that features information about the benefits of rain gardens and a list of the nine herbaceous plant species that were used in the garden.



**Above:** The Commission installed a 340-square-foot rain garden filled with native Pinelands plants at its headquarters in late June 2022.

- **Interagency Council on Climate Change (IAC):** Staff participated in a meeting of the IAC's Environmental Systems and Land Use (ESLU) Advisory Group on June 2, 2022. Member agencies of the ESLU Advisory Group include NJDEP, NJ Dept of Agriculture, NJ Dept of State, Highlands Council, NJ Sports and Exposition Authority and the Pinelands Commission. Input from the group was sought regarding the role and duties of each member agency in the development of Resilience Action Plans. Additionally, recommendations for climate change subject matter experts that will assist the Advisory Group in the development of RAP's was sought and received. Staff also participated in the IAC's Communications Working Group on June 1, 2022.
- **Surface Water Quality Standards (NJDEP):** The DEP invited staff participation in a stakeholder meeting held on June 28, 2022. The meeting reviewed the criteria and rationale for changes to water quality criteria for a number of pollutants, particularly 1,4-dioxane, perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA), perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS). The DEP also discussed implementation strategies for the anticipated updates to the surface water quality standards.

- Barnegat Bay Partnership:** Staff attended meetings for the Cedar Creek-Forked River-Oyster Creek (CFO) Watershed Protection and Restoration Plan and the Toms River Watershed Protection and Protection Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committees. During the meetings, the consultant team presented summaries of findings on water quality data for the watersheds and requested stakeholder input on prioritizing sources of water quality impairments. For the portions of the CFO Watershed planning area within the Pinelands, low dissolved oxygen (DO) was the only identified impairment in the DEP 503(d) list. The cited water quality data did not clearly support the identified impairment. In the Toms River Watershed, impairments for low DO, nutrients, temperature, and pathogens were identified. Commission staff followed up with the consultant team regarding legacy septic systems and septic system densities as well as aging public sewerage conveyance infrastructure that could be related to the pathogen and nutrient impairments.
- Pinelands Infrastructure Trust Fund (PITF):** Galloway Township contacted Commission staff to ask for information about accessing PITF grant and loans through the State I-Bank. The Township’s project for sewerage an area of the Township known as Pinehurst was prioritized in the 2019 amendment of the Pinelands Infrastructure Trust master plan. A meeting with Township representatives, I-Bank staff, DEP staff, and Pinelands staff is scheduled in July. The PITF projects have been included in the infrastructure funding legislation that facilitates disbursement through the I-Bank.

### 3 PLANNING

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#### 3.1 CONFORMANCE ACTIVITY

	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
<b>Master Plans/Ordinances Received</b>		
Adopted	11	45
Drafted or Introduced	8	51
Total <sup>1</sup>	11	66
Substantial Issue Finding <sup>2</sup>	2	6
No Substantial Issue Finding	4	23
No Issue Finding	1	9
Total	7	38

<sup>1</sup>The 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).

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<b>Finding Letters Issued<sup>3</sup></b>	5	27
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### 3.2 CULTURAL RESOURCE ACTIVITY

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Monthly Total</b>	<b>Calendar Year to Date</b>
Applications Reviewed	6	61
Surveys Required	3	5
Surveys Reviewed	0	4
Certificates of Appropriateness Required	0	1

#### Notable Activity:

- On June 18, 2022, Commission cultural resource staff gave a talk on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century history of the Pleasant Mills/Batsto area as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Blessing of the Mullica River ceremony. The ceremony was held at the St. Mary's in the Pines cemetery and was attended by approximately 50-60 participants.
- A site visit by New Jersey Historic Trust staff has been scheduled for July 12, 2022 for purposes of discussing the Commission's grant application for funding to develop a preservation plan for Fenwick Manor.

### 3.3 PINELANDS DEVELOPMENT CREDIT (PDC) PROGRAM

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Monthly Total</b>	<b>Calendar Year to Date</b>
PDCs Allocated	0.25	7.36
PDCs Severed	0	4.50
Acres Protected	0	116
PDCs Extinguished	0	0
Acres Protected	0	0
PDCs Sold	1.75	23.50
Average Sales Price per PDC	\$100,000	\$80,468
Average Sales Price per right	\$25,000	\$20,117
PDCs Redeemed	0.25	5.00

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

### Notable Activity:

- **PDC Sales:** Four sales transactions were processed during June for a total of 1.75 PDCs. All sales were for \$25,000 per right.
- **PDC Redemptions:** 0.25 PDCs were redeemed for the development of a commercial building in Berlin Township.

### 3.4 SPECIAL PROJECTS

- **Stockton University 2020 Facilities Master Plan:** Representatives from Stockton University made a presentation at the May 27, 2022 CMP Policy & Implementation Committee regarding the University's 2020 Facilities Master Plan Update. The Commission will need to review and approve this Plan as an update to Stockton's State Agency Plan. During the meeting, Commission staff provided Committee members with the history and scope of Stockton's prior two Master Plans, 1990 and 2010, respectively. Additionally, staff discussed CMP standards for review of a State Agency Plan. Staff also discussed an issue that has arisen pertaining to the boundaries of the deed restricted areas on campus and the need to amend the November 2010 deed of conservation restriction to clarify the scope of such boundaries to reflect the location of existing infrastructure. During June, staff continued to work with Stockton's consultant on GIS based mapping depicting the boundaries of the areas on campus currently subject to the deed of conservation restriction (DCR), the existing infrastructure that needs to be removed from the conserved area and the replacement acreage that will be conserved through the filing of an amended DCR.
- **Long-Term Economic Monitoring:** Staff presented the work plan for Federal fiscal year 2022 to the P&I Committee. These projects are funded through the National Parks Service. The federal fiscal year begins October 1 and goes to September 30, 2023. The work plan includes two economic monitoring projects. The first is a five-year update of the Economic Monitoring Report. This will involve collecting and analyzing the data for the same economic variables traditionally included in the long-term economic monitoring report. The second economic project is a study of the Economy of Parks and Open Space. The Economy of Parks and Open Space project was identified as an area of the economy that is not well-understood during the re-evaluation of the long-term economic monitoring program in 2017. This project overlaps with some of the goals identified by NJDEP as that agency prepares the statewide recreation plan over the next 18 months. The staff's presentation also noted that several cultural resources projects will be part of the NPS work plan. Those projects are a report on the findings of the Brotherton Ground Penetrating Radar survey, a GPR survey of an historic cemetery in Tabernacle Township, and a contract to develop a cell phone app for visiting the Pine Barrens Byway.
- **Permanent Land Protection (PLP) System:** Staff from the Planning and MIS offices launched the completed PLP system to staff and to the Commission in June. The completion of the database structure and User Interface for in-house use now allows staff to access a wealth of information about permanently protected lands in the Pinelands Area. Staff can search for deed restrictions via the interface or using GIS mapping tools. The interface allows searches based on block and lot numbers, by municipality, or by a date range. Details such as management area, acreage,



preservation reason, or preservation agency can be seen. Notably, the system allows users to immediately access a PDF copy of the recorded deed of conservation restriction where the deed has already been found and linked. Additional benefits of the new system include accurate, up-to-date report production and mapping tools that will assist planning and regulatory programs staff with reliable information to complete other projects and application reviews. Lastly, the new system allows the Commission to offer routinely and automatically updated mapping as a new layer on the Interactive Map available on the Commission website. An email has been sent to counties and other preservation partners to let them know that the mapping has been made available. One county farmlands preservation office has already called to comment favorably about the utility of the mapping to their office and to appraisers and others working in the land preservation field. A handbook for maintaining the PLP system records has been completed as a staff reference for continuing updates to the PLP records as new deed restrictions are recorded and staff that attended the launch of the system in-house received a user guide to facilitate use of the system. This project was funded through the National Park Service Long-Term Economic Monitoring grant and represents the culmination of several years of work to create the framework, interface, and GIS functionality and to import available data from older/outdated systems

- Municipal Utilities Authority (CMCMUA) Landfill Wasteflow Monitoring:** Staff requested the five-year report of solid waste landfilled in the expansion area between 2016 and 2021. The CMCMUA Executive Director responded in a letter. Staff will be reviewing the submitted information against the requirements in the CMP. Related to the wasteflow monitoring, staff began reviewing the history of the CMP amendments that require reporting.

## 4 REGULATORY PROGRAMS

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### 4.1 APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Activity	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
Pre-Application Conferences	12	67
Certificates of Filing	15	98
Public Development Reports	3	13
Forestry Certificates of Filing	1	3
PDC Letters of Interpretation	1	8
Non-PDC Letters of Interpretation	1	1
MOA Consistency Determinations	1	31
Review of Agency Determinations	50	380

## 4.2 NOTABLE APPLICATIONS

- **Residential Development, Hamilton Township** (App. No. 2004-0351.002): A Certificate of Filing (CF) was issued on September 11, 2009 for the development of 608 dwelling units and associated site improvements on a 111.68-acre lot in the Township. As a requirement to complete the application and receive a CF, threatened and endangered (T&E) plant and animal surveys were completed for the proposed development in 2007 and 2008.

Thereafter, a 20-year General Development Plan (GDP) was approved by the Hamilton Township Planning Board for the development of 475 residential dwelling units and associated site improvements. The Commission issued a letter dated March 10, 2010 indicating that the Township GDP approval raised a substantial issue with respect to the conformance of the proposed development with the minimum standards of the Township land use ordinance and the CMP. The development did not move forward.

Using the prior CF, the applicant received an Amended Township GDP approval on May 5, 2022 for up to 600 dwelling units on the parcel.

On June 7, 2022 and June 23, 2022, the Commission staff met with representatives of the applicant to discuss all aspects of the proposed development. By letter dated June 23, 2022 to representatives of the applicant, the Commission staff provided guidance regarding the application. That guidance included a requirement for updated T&E plant and animals surveys for the proposed development.

- **Residential Development, Woodland Township** (App. No 1992-0327.001): A T&E species survey was completed in 2005 for this application. On December 17, 2008, the Commission staff issued a letter indicating that a Woodland Township Land Use Board preliminary and final subdivision approval and a conditional Burlington County Planning Board preliminary subdivision approval for 13 lots and the development of 12 single family dwellings on the parcel could take effect.

By letter dated May 10, 2022, the Commission staff scheduled a public hearing to review a T&E animal species “substantial issue” raised by final subdivision approvals granted by the Burlington County Planning Board on February 1, 2022 and March 29, 2022.

By letter dated June 13, 2022, the Commission staff advised the attorney representing the applicant that since the 2005 T&E species survey, the Commission staff has records of additional T&E animal sightings for a different species in the immediate vicinity of the 21-acre parcel. Our letter further advised that Commission issuance of a letter in 2008 indicating that a permit or approval may take effect does not indefinitely protect development from addressing changes in municipal zoning or environmental standards, such as the T&E species protection standard. Since approximately 17 years has passed since the 2005 T&E species survey for this application and the Commission staff has subsequent sightings of a different T&E animal species, an updated T&E species survey is necessary.

- **New Egypt Speedway, Plumsted Township** (App. No. 1985-0035.012): On February 23, 2022, the staff received a meeting request from the Township to discuss whether certain land uses,

including the establishment of a tractor trailer storage yard, that are occurring on the Speedway parcel require application to the Commission. Two commercial uses not associated with the Speedway have been established on the parcel. On March 16, 2022, the Commission staff met with representatives of Plumsted Township and the Ocean County Soil Conservation District to discuss the matter. By letter dated March 24, 2022, the staff sent a letter to the property owner indicating that development had occurred on the parcel without application to, and approval by, the Township and the Pinelands Commission. The letter asked for the Township's assistance in issuing all appropriate violation notices and municipal court summonses.

On June 13, 2022, the Mayor invited the Commission staff to attend a joint site inspection with the property owner, and the staffs of the Township and the Ocean County Soil Conservation District. On June 30, 2022, the Commission staff attended the site inspection. To date, an application for the development has not been submitted to the Commission. Although not regulated by the CMP, noise and traffic associated with the traffic trailer storage yard are among the primary concerns of Township residents.

- **Three Lot Subdivision, Shamong Township** (App. No. 1982-3783.003): This matter concerns the creation of a residential lot under the cultural housing provision, which allows for single family dwellings on 3.2-acre lots for families with long-term ties to the Pinelands. Such lots can be created throughout the Pinelands Area, regardless of zoning. The applicant for this subdivision submitted an affidavit to the Commission that the existing dwelling on a proposed lot would continue to be their principal place of residence, as required by the cultural housing provision. Within approximately one year of Township subdivision approval, the applicant sold the lot containing the existing dwelling. Neither the applicant nor the new lot owner have proposed an approach to resolve the issue. By letter dated February 23, 2022, the Commission staff suggested an approach to resolve the issue. By email dated February 28, 2022, the attorney representing the new owner proposed to modify the Commission staff's suggested approach. By letter dated March 8, 2022, the Commission staff responded to the attorney's submission. The Commission letter provided guidance regarding how to resolve the issue raised by this application.

On June 24, 2022, the Commission staff sent a letter to the current property owner indicating that a commercial garden center had been established on the parcel without application to the Commission. The development constitutes a violation of the application requirements of the Shamong Township land use ordinance and the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan. The applicant's attorney has requested a meeting to discuss the matter. That meeting is currently being scheduled.

- **Recreation Trails, Pemberton Township** (App. No. 1982-3181.008): A site inspection of the proposed trails was conducted by our staff and representatives of the applicant on January 14, 2022. The trails are proposed to be located primarily in wetlands and the required buffer to wetlands. On February 18, 2022, the Commission staff received a request to meet to discuss what materials could be used to surface trails in wetlands and the required buffer to wetlands. By letter dated February 28, 2022, the Commission staff advised of the information that must be provided for the staff to determine whether various trail surfacing materials identified by the applicant would be consistent with CMP wetlands protection standards. On June 10, 2022, the Commission received additional information about how the proposed trails could be

constructed consistent with the Commission's wetlands protection standards. That information is currently under review.

- **Vegetation Clearing, Hamilton Township** (App. No. 1990-0191.001): On April 6, 2022, the Commission staff attended a Zoom court hearing in support of Township officials regarding clearing that had occurred on a 7.75-acre lot in Hamilton Township. An unspecified portion of the clearing occurred in the required buffer to wetlands. At that hearing, the defendant did not appear. The Court issued a warrant for the property owner. On June 1, 2022, the Commission staff attended another court hearing regarding this matter. By letter dated June 7, 2022, the Commission staff advised the property owner that they would assist with the wetlands buffer clearing issue if the property owner would have the wetlands and wetland buffer field delineated on the parcel.
- **Communications Tower, Woodland Township** (App. No. 1981-0162.002): This application proposes a communications tower as an accessory use to the existing Woodland Township EMS/Fire Company located on the same parcel. The purpose of the tower is to improve emergency communications service to the existing EMS/Fire Company. The application proposes an AT&T FirstNet service antenna array on the tower. AT&T FirstNet service provides a combination of emergency wireless communication service and commercial (general public) wireless communication service. Unless it is demonstrated that the proposed tower qualifies as accessory to the existing EMS/Fire Company, it is not a permitted land use. A Township site plan approval for the proposed development is currently the subject of a Commission staff public hearing. Should the applicant wish to proceed with a hearing, the matter will need to be transmitted to the New Jersey Office of Administrative Law.

On April 7, 2022, the applicant again submitted additional information in an effort to demonstrate that the proposed communications tower with FirstNet Service constitutes an accessory use to the existing EMS/Fire Company located on the parcel. On June 7, 2022, the Commission staff issued a letter to the applicant indicating that the submitted information did not demonstrate that the proposed communications tower constitutes an accessory use to the existing EMS/Fire Company located on the parcel and a hearing remained necessary. The applicant has not formally requested a hearing at the New Jersey Office of Administrative Law.

- **Communications Tower, Washington Township** (App. No. 2022-0069.001): On May 3, 2022, an application was initiated for a proposed communications tower at the Lower Bank Volunteer Fire Company. The application appears to propose AT&T FirstNet service. It is currently unclear whether the tower is proposed as an accessory use to the existing firehouse or as a principal use. On June 15, 2022, the Commission staff issued a letter to the applicant requesting additional information to complete the application.

### 4.3 OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

- **New Jersey Forest Stewardship Task Force:** On June 20, 2022 and June 21, 2022, the Commission staff attended meetings of two working groups established by the New Jersey Forest Stewardship Task Force: the Forestry Climate Work Group and the Forestry Ecological Health Work Group. The Commission staff will be preparing forestry policy proposals for the Pinelands Area. It is anticipated that the proposals will be submitted to the Commission's Policy and Implementation Committee for review at the

July 2022 meeting. Thereafter, the policy proposals will be forwarded to the New Jersey Forestry Task Force for discussion and consideration.

## 5 SCIENCE

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### 5.1 ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

- **Water Level Monitoring:** In June, Communications staff measured water levels at forest plots and ponds in the Commission network of long-term monitoring sites. This work is completed each month with assistance from the Communications Office.
- **Water Quality Monitoring:** Science staff sampled pH and specific conductance at the 47 Pinelands-wide stream sites. This sampling occurs in April, June, August, and October of each year to monitor long-term changes in these two parameters.
- **Annual Frog and Toad Surveys:** Science staff completed the June round of nighttime frog and toad vocalization surveys. These surveys are completed monthly from March – June of each year to monitor long-term changes in vocalizing frogs and toads.

### 5.2 LONG TERM STUDIES

- **King Snake Study, Joint Corn Snake Study, and Rare Snake Monitoring:** Science and Herpetological Associates (HA) staff continued to radio track snakes in June. At the end of June, a total of 48 snakes were being radio tracked as part of these three studies. The 48 snakes include one hognose snake, 10 pine snakes, 13 corn snakes, and 24 king snakes. The primary goal is to locate nesting areas, shedding areas, and the winter hibernacula for each snake. As part of the King Snake Study, a series of environmental, habitat, and behavioral variables are also measured each time a king snake is relocated in the field.

In June, 20 gravid (i.e., pregnant) snakes were captured at or near nest areas and brought back to lay eggs in captivity. The 20 females included one hognose snake, one pine snake, two king snakes, and 16 corn snakes. Some of these snakes have already begun to lay eggs. After depositing eggs, most of these females will be implanted with



**Above:** A clutch of 17 eggs deposited in a nest area by a king snake was excavated to incubate and hatch in captivity. Hatchlings will be PIT tagged for permanent identification.

radio transmitters and tracked to locate their winter dens. The hatchlings will be pit tagged and released for future population monitoring.

Science and HA staff continued to monitor the drift fence for animals found under the wood and metal cover and in box traps established along the drift fence array. In June, Science and HA staff captured several corn and pine snakes found at the fence, as well as many other animals. Male corn and pine snakes have been implanted with radio transmitters and are being tracked to locate their dens. As mentioned above, female snakes of suitable size will be implanted with radio transmitters and tracked after they lay eggs.

Dr. Howard Reinert of The College of New Jersey continued to train Science staff on how to conduct snake surgeries to implant and remove radio transmitters.

Science staff resubmitted their revised proposal for a 2022 scientific collecting permit for snakes to the NJDEP Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP) for approval.



**Above:** A male pine snake being radio tracked as part of the Rare Snake Monitoring program.

- **Box Turtle Study:** Two additional box turtles were found in June and added to the study, bringing the total number of box turtles being tracked to 29 turtles. Science staff coordinated with NJDEP ENSP staff to obtain additional funding for the study, which is expected to be available in early 2023.

### 5.3 OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

- Science, Regulatory, and Executive staff met with a member of the public about damage to natural resources from off-road vehicles.

## 6 COMMUNICATIONS

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### 6.1 COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLICATIONS

- **Website:** The Pinelands Commission's website was viewed 13,528 times in June 2022.
- **Inquiries/Correspondence:** The Communications Office received and responded to 52 inquiries from the public in June, including phone calls, e-mails, and media inquiries.

## 6.2 EVENTS, OUTREACH & INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS

- **Springtime, Pinelands-themed World Water Monitoring Challenge Event:** Commission staff educated 100 students about water quality and the importance of protecting the Pinelands at Batsto Lake on June 2, 2022. Students slipped on waders and used nets to catch fish, while learning about the native and non-native species that can be found in Batsto Lake.



**Above:** The Commission educated 100 students about the Pinelands during a springtime, Pinelands-themed World Water Monitoring Challenge Event at Batsto Lake on June 2, 2022.

- **Pinelands Speaker Series Webinars:** The Commission hosted a webinar on Communication Among Plants on June 9, 2022.

- **Science Office Assistance:** A member of the Communications Office assisted the Science Office by measuring water levels on June 6 and June 7, 2022.

- **Social Media Enhancements:** In June, staff shared 54 photos on the Commission's Instagram site and 25 tweets on Twitter. Facebook locked the Commission out of its account in late May, but staff has contacted the social media site to contest the lockout. The Commission continues to add content to its YouTube Channel, which now has 935 subscribers.



**Above:** The Commission shared 51 photos on Instagram in June 2022, including this photo of a native grass pink orchid blooming in the Pinelands.

- **Pinelands Summer Short Course:** Staff finalized the lineup for the 6<sup>th</sup> annual Pinelands Summer Short Course. The daylong, educational event will be held at Stockton University's Kramer Hall in downtown Hammonton on July 21, 2022.



Registration is now open. The event will feature five classroom programs and four field trips, including a guided kayak trip on the Mullica River, a walking tour of Batsto Village, a guided nature walk around Hammonton Lake and a tour of the Philip E. Marucci Center for Blueberry and Cranberry Research and Extension in Chatsworth.

## 7 INFORMATION SYSTEMS

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- **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 provided desktop support, implemented enhancements and bug fixes to streamline operations and facilitate remote work. Enhancements were released to prioritize paperless transactions.
- **Cybersecurity:** Vigilance to protect the internal networks, hardware, and data of the Pinelands Commission is critical in today's networked world. The Information Systems office participated in the monthly call hosted by the New Jersey Cybersecurity & Communications Integration Cell (NJCCIC). Staff released new service accounts and scanning processes to comply with new password policies. Free cybersecurity training was provided by NJCCIC to staff.
- **Permanent Land Protection (PLP) Data System:** The PLP system manages the data related to all the preserved land in the Pinelands National Reserve. Staff supported the Planning Office in demonstrating the new system during an internal meeting for Pinelands Commission staff and for the Commissioners and the public during the June monthly meeting.
- **Ad Hoc Reporting:** Staff assist the Pinelands Commission by generating reports to provide insight into relevant topics of interest. An Agency Approval General Development Plan Approval report was developed and released for the Regulatory Programs staff.
- **Pinelands Development Credit Bank:** The Pinelands Development Credit (PDC) Bank utilizes custom software to manage all operations including tracking data and issuing certificates. Staff continued to work with the Planning Office on new report requests in preparation of the annual report due in August.
- **Technology Enhancements:** Staff members continually evaluate emerging technologies for how they can impact or enhance the office environment. New Dell servers were received to replace aging Windows 2008 servers that are no longer supported. Staff started to configure the new servers. Staff worked with the other offices of the Pinelands Commission to prepare and submit a draft Information Systems budget for 2023 detailing all the possible technology needs

## 8 BUSINESS OFFICE

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### 8.1 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- **Application Fees:** June 2022, Net Total: \$77,414.80; Fiscal Year to Date Total: \$1,113,432.35 (222.69% of the budgeted projection for FY2022).

## **8.2 FACILITIES MANAGEMENT**

- Pemberton Township changed the Richard J. Sullivan Center's outdated water meter. The water meter resides underground along the property line and Springfield Road.
- Central Jersey Masonry & Chimney Sweeps came to provide an estimate for the re-pointing of the Fenwick Manor Main Chimney.