

The PINELANDER

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW JERSEY PINELANDS COMMISSION / WINTER 2013

Pinelands Commission provides funds to help preserve 5,079 acres in the Great Egg Harbor River watershed

The New Jersey Pinelands Commission recently joined forces with the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), The Nature Conservancy and Conservation Resources, Inc. to permanently preserve 5,079 acres of woodlands and wetlands in Atlantic County at a cost of \$9.7 million.

The DEP's Green Acres program finalized two related land purchases from Lenape Farms and HBH Associates. The project represents one of the largest state preservation effort in years, and it helps to link more than 56,000 acres of previously existing state wildlife management areas, plus thousands of additional

acres of county parkland in an area where the Pine Barrens meets a coastal estuary ecosystem.

"This is an excellent addition to our efforts to preserve environmentally-valuable land," said Nancy Wittenberg, Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission. "Including this parcel, the Commission has now contributed a total of \$7.9 million toward the permanent preservation of 6,670 acres of land."

Wittenberg helped to announce the project during a press conference



Pinelands Commission Executive Director Nancy Wittenberg helped announce the project during a press conference on January 17, 2013.

Photo/Paul Leakan

that was held at the property on January 17, 2013.

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Commission advances in-depth review of Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan

NEW LISBON – The New Jersey Pinelands Commission is undertaking an in-depth review of its Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP).

"The Plan review process provides us with a great opportunity to step back and evaluate how we can better meet the Commission's goals," said Nancy Wittenberg, the Commission's Executive Director.

The Commission has implemented the CMP, the rules that govern land-use and development in the million-acre

Pinelands Area of southern New Jersey, since it took effect in 1981. This is the Commission's fourth review of the Plan.

A Plan Review Committee composed of five Commission members has been meeting each month since June 2012.

The Committee gathered public comment on the Commission's implementation of the Comprehensive Management Plan during four public meetings.

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The property flanks U.S. Route 50 in Estell Manor. The bulk of the property, known as Lenape Farms, contains large expanses of forested uplands that merge into coastal marshlands. The preserved property is now part of a state wildlife management area, providing hunting, fishing, hiking and bird watching opportunities for the public. It will also protect headwaters of Steven's Creek, Gibson's Creek and Mill Creek, which are tributaries to Great Egg Harbor River.

The preserved land directly links Atlantic County's Estell Manor Park to three DEP wildlife management areas – the Tuckahoe Wildlife Management Area and Gibson Creek Wildlife Management Area to the south and the Maple Lake Wildlife Management Area to the west. The Great Egg Harbor River Wildlife Management Area and the sprawling Peaslee Wildlife Management

are also located nearby.

The newly acquired land is now the Lenape Farms unit of the Tuckahoe Wildlife Management Area. The public can access the property by foot immediately while the DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife develops and implements a management plan, which will include formal trail development.

The property provides habitat for a number of wildlife species, including the barred owl, northern pine snake, Pine Barrens tree frog, Cooper's hawk, timber rattlesnake, Cope's gray tree frog, bald eagle, red-headed woodpecker, black rail, osprey, black-crowned night heron and diamondback terrapin.

Under terms of the agreement, Lenape Farms was paid \$9.4 million and HBH Associates received \$334,000.

The DEP provided \$6.5 million in Green Acres funding. The Nature Conservancy provided \$3.2 million, which included a \$2.3

million Pinelands Conservation grant from the Pinelands Commission and a \$264,000 grant from Conservation Resources Inc., a nonprofit organization that provides financial and technical services to the conservation community in New Jersey.

"The preservation of this property further enhances the quality of life in our state, providing additional outdoor recreational opportunities for our residents while adding environmental protections for an important natural area in southern New Jersey," DEP Commissioner Bob Martin said. "We commend our partners for working with the state to preserve such a large tract of ecologically important land at the core of tens of thousands of acres of previously preserved lands."



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Written public comments were accepted from July 16 to September 28, 2012. All of the comments have been posted on the Commission's website (www.nj.gov/pinelands).

The Plan Review Committee is currently identifying possible changes

to the Plan that would improve the agency's efficiency.

As part of the CMP review, the Commission will produce a report that charts the agency's accomplishments and actions taken in support of the goals of the CMP since the last Plan Review. Three such reports have been issued to date, and they

are available on the Commission's website.

The report and its findings will help guide Commission members in their discussions of possible future amendments to the Plan.





Joseph DiBello of Ardmore, Pa., sworn in as the new federal representative on the Pinelands Commission

NEW LISBON – Joseph DiBello, a 30-year-veteran of the National Park Service, was sworn in as the new federal representative on the Pinelands Commission during the panel's meeting on Dec. 14, 2012.

"I am proud to represent the federal government, U.S. Department of the Interior and the National Park Service and join in this partnership to preserve, protect and enhance the truly special natural and cultural resources of the New Jersey Pinelands," he said.

"Mr. DiBello brings a wealth of relevant experience to the Commission, and I'm very pleased with his appointment," said Nancy Wittenberg, the Commission's Executive Director.

A resident of Ardmore, Pa., DiBello serves as the Superintendent of the National Park Service's Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail. Based in Philadelphia, DiBello guides the planning and management of this newly-authorized trail through nine states and Washington D.C. in partnership with National Park Service units, National Heritage Areas, federal agencies and many local and private organizations and sites. The groups commemorate and interpret the journey of the Continental and the French forces during the American Revolution.

DiBello began his career in the U.S. Department of the Interior as a planner in 1974 and joined the National Park Service in 1981 conducting special studies and planning projects. He then led the park and resource planning program for



Deputy Attorney General Kristin Heinzerling (left) administers the oath of office to Joseph DiBello.
Photo/Paul Leakan

the Northeast Region of the National Park Service and a suite of cultural, natural and recreation assistance programs. He played a key role in establishing parks, heritage areas, national wild and scenic rivers and trails and community landscape conservation efforts. DiBello, and his teams, are noted for their collaborative work with numerous government agencies, communities, private organizations and landowners to create partnerships for preserving, conserving, interpreting and managing our nation's outstanding natural, cultural and recreation resources.

DiBello holds a bachelor's degree in social science from Drexel University and a master of business administration in 2006 from Temple University. He recently completed the Leadership for the 21st Century

program at Harvard University.

DiBello replaces Richard L. Harris as the Secretary of the Interior's appointee. Harris, who served as the Associate Regional Director of Natural Resources and Science for the Northeast Region of the National Parks Service (NPS), stepped down from the Commission on July 2012.

The Pinelands Commission consists of 15 members: seven appointed by the Governor of New Jersey, one appointed by each of the seven Pinelands counties and one appointed by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. Members of the Commission serve staggered, three-year terms and do not receive compensation for their service.





Pinelands Commission provides funds to preserve 200 acres in Medford and Shamong

NEW LISBON – A 200-acre parcel in Medford and Shamong townships has been permanently preserved with funds administered by the Pinelands Commission.

The Commission has transferred a total of \$436,563 from the Pinelands Conservation Fund to YMCA Camp Ockanickon Inc., which used the money toward its purchase of the property, located adjacent to the camp on McKendimen Road.

“We’re thrilled to participate in a project that will help protect the Pinelands on two fronts,” said Nancy Wittenberg, Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission. “First, this acquisition protects land with extensive forests and swamps that serve as the headwaters of the Rancocas Creek. Secondly, the Camp will use this property to expand its educational and recre-

ational programs, which will further raise awareness and appreciation of the Pinelands.”

YMCA Camp Ockanickon Inc. bought the parcel for \$1.1 million, using funds from the Pinelands Commission, Burlington County, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s Green Acres Program and the Haines Family Foundation, Inc. of Chatsworth, NJ.

The land contains the headwaters of two large bodies of water that the camp uses for recreational and ecological studies. Approximately 160 acres of the property are located in Medford, with the remaining acreage in Shamong.

“We are committed to providing opportunities for our community to learn, grow and thrive,” said Keith VanDerzee, Chief Executive Of-

ficer of YMCA Camp Ockanickon Inc. “This purchase is a reflection of that commitment, and we’re grateful, honored and proud that these entities have chosen to support us in this project.”

YMCA Camp Ockanickon Inc. is a nonprofit organization that operates Camp Ockanickon, Camp Matollionequay and Lake Stockwell Day Camp on 565 acres in Medford. It works to help children, teens and families discover their full potential by providing and supporting opportunities to learn, grow and thrive amidst caring, supportive adults.

VanDerzee said the forests, swamps and streams on the newly-preserved property will enhance and expand the camp’s environmental education and recreation offerings. Approximately 100 schools throughout the state bring classes to the camp to complement their science curriculum by learning about the special ecosystem in the Pinelands, he said.

The Pinelands Conservation Fund was created in 2004 as part of an agreement with the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities to permit the construction and upgrade of an electric transmission line through eastern portions of the Pinelands. Under the agreement, the special fund was established to further the Pinelands protection program and ensure a greater level of protection of the unique resources of the Pinelands Area. The utility that built the transmission lines, Atlantic City Electric (formerly Conectiv), provided \$13 million to establish the Fund.



The Pinelands Commission provided \$436,563 from its Pinelands Conservation Fund to preserve the 200-acre parcel above.

Photo/Paul Leakan



Pinelands Short Course set for March 23, 2013

Twenty-fourth annual event to feature 33 presentations

NEW LISBON – The 24th annual Pinelands Short Course will feature 33 presentations, including 18 new programs that will explore the region's unique history, ecology, culture and music.

"The Commission is proud to present this outstanding lineup of educational programs," said Nancy Wittenberg, the Commission's Executive Director. "Each year, this event raises awareness and appreciation of this special part of New Jersey."

The Pinelands Short Course is sponsored by the New Jersey Pinelands Commission and Burlington County College's (BCC) Pinelands Institute for Natural and Environmental Studies. The program will be held on March 23 at Burlington County College's Pemberton Township campus. It is open to all who are interested in learning about the Pinelands. Last year's event attracted more than 600 people.

This year's event includes two live musical performances and four field trips, including a guided canoe tour along a 3.3-mile section of the Rancocas Creek.

The new courses include a presentation with live hawks, owls and falcons, as well as programs on container gardening with carnivorous plants, the Pinelands and its role in the Revolutionary War, roadsides and rare plants, conservation issues in the Pinelands, preserving land to protect bog turtles, Barnegat Bay shellfish, cranberries, the Invasive Species Strike Team, estuaries and the Pine Barrens, pathogens in New Jersey amphibians, Eastern



Matt Abatelli, center, showed participants how to build fire by hand as part of a Wilderness Survival program during the 2012 Pinelands Short Course. His presentation will be offered during the 24th annual event.

Photo/Paul Leakan

fence lizards, Island Beach State Park, an ecotour of the Great Bay Boulevard Peninsula, the wetlands environment, orienteering, capturing the beauty of the Pinelands through photography and a hike of the Dot and Brooks Evert Trail in the Franklin Parker Preserve.

The event also will feature popular courses from previous years, including a discussion about New Jersey's biodiversity and presentations on Pinelands frogs, toads and fish, current research on the Northern Pine Snake, the secret world of plants and pollinators, forest modeling, a pictorial journey of the Pine Barrens, early advocates of the Pinelands, wilderness survival, Double Trouble State Park and Whitesbog Village Living History.

Canoes, paddles and life jackets will be provided for participants who register for the Rancocas Creek

canoe tour. Participants should have some canoeing experience, and registration will be limited.

The Pinelands Short Course is registered with the New Jersey Department of Education, and professional development credits are available to New Jersey teachers who attend. Discounted registration fees are offered to senior citizens and students. The Short Course brochure and registration form includes complete, detailed descriptions of every program and presenter.

To request an event brochure/registration form or for more information, please call (609) 894-7300, ext. 125. The registration form also can be printed from the Pinelands Commission's Web site. The address is: www.nj.gov/pinelands.





Commission's Pinelands Research Series providing monthly forum for scientists to present and discuss research

NEW LISBON – On a recent winter day, more than 50 people streamed into the conference room in the Richard J. Sullivan Center to learn about taxonomically challenging plant groups in the Pinelands.

The presenter, Gerry Moore, was pleased to have the opportunity to present his research.

"The audience represented a good mix of scientists from academia, government (federal and state), non-profits, and the private sector, as well as the general public, and this resulted in an informative dialogue during and after the talk," said Moore, who is the leader of the National Plant Data Team within the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Moore's talk was the latest installment of the Pinelands Research Series, which provides a forum for scientists to present and discuss their research on a variety of topics related to the Pinelands.

The program was created by John F. Bunnell, the Chief Scientist of the Pinelands Commission.



The Pinelands Commission has hosted 12 technical presentations at its headquarters as part of the Pinelands Research Series. More than 50 people attended Gerry Moore's presentation (above) on January 23, 2013.

Photo/Paul Leakan

"It started in November 2011 when I arranged to have Inga LaPuma from Rutgers come to the Commission to present her Ph.D. work on fire," Bunnell said. "I liked hearing about her research, that it was current, and it focused on a 'hot' Pinelands topic. Plus, a nice-sized crowd, as well as her mom, showed up to listen, indicating lots of interest."

The Commission has hosted 12 presentations -- one each month -- since formally launching the Research Se-

ries in early 2012. The program has been very successful thus far, Bunnell said.

"We get a lot of compliments," he said. "The presenters have been enthusiastic, the audience has been interested, and we've hosted talks on a variety of topics. I plan to keep having talks as long as people want to come talk about their work and other people show up to hear about it."

The lineup of presentations, both past and future, can be viewed on the Commission's web site. The address is <http://www.nj.gov/pinelands/science/pinesseries/>.

The next presentation is slated for February 15 at 10 a.m., and it will focus on the use of aquatic invertebrates to assess Pinelands streams. The program will be delivered by Dean Bryson, an environmental specialist with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Bureau of Freshwater and Biological Monitoring.

Upcoming programs will focus on research related to pesticides and amphibians, as well as soil microarthropods, Pine Barrens tree frog genetics and the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer system.

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<http://www.nj.gov/pinelands>

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