

The

PINELANDER

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Pinelands Commission to embark on new wildfire planning initiative

The New Jersey Pinelands Commission will undertake a new wildfire planning initiative aimed at better mitigating wildfire hazards in Pinelands municipalities that face the highest risk.

“In light of the recent major wildfire in Burlington and Ocean counties, we believe it is vital for us to find ways to enhance forest fire safety measures in the Pinelands,” said John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the Commission.

Related story:

Education, preparedness is key in preventing wildfire damage.

From the NJ Forest Fire Service
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Burlington and Ocean counties, we believe it is vital for us to find ways to enhance forest fire safety measures in the Pinelands,” said John C. Stokes, Executive Director of

development and wildland forest meet -- and engage at least two of these high-risk municipalities in a planning process to implement improved fire hazard mitigation measures. These measures may include fuel breaks where none exist and improved maintenance of existing fuel breaks.

Pinelands regulations contain specific fire hazard mitigation standards that are in place to protect life and property from catastrophic forest fires and to ensure the maintenance of Pinelands forest ecosystems. For example, a fuel break of 75 feet is required



Homes with adequate defensible space, such as this one, were not damaged in the recent wildfire that burned more than 14,000 acres in the Pinelands. Photo/New Jersey Forest Fire Service

around structures located in a high fire hazard area.

All of the fire mitigation requirements in the Pinelands are based upon New Jersey Forest Fire Service recommendations.



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Paul E. Galletta joins Pinelands Commission as Atlantic County’s new representative

Paul E. Galletta recently joined the New Jersey Pinelands Commission as Atlantic County’s representative.

A lifelong resident of Hammonton, Galletta is the owner and director of the Atlantic Blueberry Company, the largest cultivated blueberry farm in the United States. He is a member of the Atlantic County Board of Agriculture, the New Jersey Beekeepers Advisory Board, the New Jersey Farm



Galletta

Bureau, the North American Blueberry Council, the U.S. High Bush Blueberry Council and the New Jersey Blueberry Advisory Council. He is also vice chairman of the Hammonton Parks and Recreation Commission, chair of the Hammonton Lake Water Quality Subcommittee and vice president of the Hammonton Italian Sons and Daughters' board of trustees.

Galletta also coaches many youth sports programs in Hammonton, a Town that is located entirely within the Pinelands Area.

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Wildfires are inevitable; Preventing them is optional

By Gregory McLaughlin

Courtesy of the New Jersey Forest Fire Service

For many residents living in the Pinelands communities of Warren Grove, Barnegat, Stafford, and Little Egg Harbor, the wildfire of May 15, 2007 is one that will have long-lasting impressions. Usually, Route 539 provides a safe area of operations for the Forest Fire Service, and many wildfires are prevented from crossing the road. This one, however, rolled across the highway without slowing down. Many of Warren Grove's residents are small farmers who have horses, goats and llamas. Thus, there was not only a concern for life and property, but for the health and safety of livestock from heavy, particulate-filled smoke and from the heat of the approaching wildfire. Luckily, many residents of Warren Grove had experienced wildfires in the past and they were prepared. Warren Grove is one of New Jersey's thirteen communities designated as a Firewise Community/USA. The residents and their volunteer fire company cooperated with and assisted the Forest Fire Service, which enabled us to create fire-breaks and perform back-burning operations. Their knowledge of wildfire danger, preparedness and quick action helped to prevent loss of life and property.

Some of the communities to the north and east of Warren Grove were not so lucky. As the wildfire grew in size and intensity, it continued to spread rapidly to the northeast. Many residents living adjacent to Route 72 in Barnegat and



Increased development in the Wildland Urban Interface can have serious consequences. Communities in the path of the recent wildfire in the Pinelands suffered damage.

Photo/Courtesy of the New Jersey Forest Fire Service

Stafford Townships were evacuated. Some of these residents were not prepared and the evacuation process was time-consuming and cumbersome. Unfortunately, several homes were destroyed and many others damaged by the wildfire.

The Forest Fire Service has been protecting lives, property and natural resources since 1906. While this will be recorded as one of New Jersey's worst wildfires, it doesn't take a large wildfire to cause property damage and threaten lives. It is estimated that 56 percent of all New Jersey homes are located in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). An increase in rural development creates increased wildfire concerns such as an increased frequency of wildfire ignitions, traffic congestion, unprepared residents, and less opportunity to carry out effective pre-suppression activities.

The Forest Fire Service hopes that

New Jersey residents understand the danger of wildfire and become proactive to protect their community and prevent wildfire. One way to do so is to participate in planning and preparedness programs, such as the Firewise Communities/USA program. The Firewise Communities/USA program is a new national initiative sponsored by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group. The program is designed to facilitate and provide information and resources to towns, municipalities, developments and communities that need to adopt long-term, proactive solutions to protect homes and natural resources from the risk of wildland fire.

The Forest Fire service will help interested communities:

- Conduct hazard assessments for structures in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI);

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Paul E. Galletta joins Pinelands Commission as Atlantic County's new representative

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Galletta replaced Edward A. Wuillermin Jr., who had represented Atlantic County on the Pinelands Commission since July 2001.

The Pinelands Commission consists of 15 members, including seven members who are appointed by the Governor of New Jersey; one member appointed by each of the seven Pinelands counties, and one member appointed by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

Members of the Commission serve staggered three-year terms and are uncompensated for their service. The full Commission meets each month.



Commission signs agreement to end direct discharge of treated wastewater into Pinelands stream

Pinelands Commission Executive Director John C. Stokes has signed an agreement to end the direct discharge of treated wastewater into a Pinelands stream in Buena Borough, Atlantic County.

The Commission voted to approve the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) amongst itself, the Buena Borough Municipal Utilities Authority (BBMUA) and Buena Vista Township on April 13.

Under the agreement, the Commission will permit the BBMUA to build a wastewater infiltration-percolation facility on a 61-acre parcel in Buena Borough, upon which the BBMUA would land apply treated wastewater and ultimately cease discharge of treated wastewater into the Deep Run. The BBMUA operates a wastewater treatment facility that currently discharges wastewater into the Deep Run, which flows easterly to the Great Egg Harbor River. Discharge of wastewater to surface water bodies is prohibited under the

water quality standards of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan, and BBMUA has been obligated to cease the discharge since 1995.

The 61-acre property in question is located in a Pinelands Agricultural Production Area, where such a facility normally would not be permitted under the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan. However, the Commission determined that the MOA includes measures that will ensure an equivalent measure of protection of Pinelands resources.

The agreement contains specific milestones that will eliminate all discharge of treated wastewater into the Deep Run by 2014. Under the agreement, Buena Vista Township will permanently deed restrict 232 acres of municipally-owned land in its Pinelands Forest and Rural Development Areas

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Wildfires are inevitable; Preventing them is optional

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- Design Community Wildfire Preparedness Plans;
- Identify risks to wildfire; and
- Plot strategy for wildfire hazard mitigation.

In addition to working closely with communities to achieve these few simple steps to enrollment, the NJ Forest Fire Service will also assist communities in obtaining grant funding to implement fire-wise concepts, and wildfire preven-

tion and education events. Agencies and organizations responsible for wildland fire management agree: we can reduce the loss of lives, property, and damage to natural resources from wildfire, by building and maintaining communities that are compatible with their natural surroundings. There is no single solution, however, to achieving this common goal. The Firewise Communities concept is successful because it emphasizes local decision-making and encourages com-

munity representatives, including homeowners to develop their own plan for achieving a set of common goals. In general, the most successful wildfire mitigation programs are driven by the individuals that will benefit most from their efforts: the residents.

For more information about wildfire prevention and preparedness or about becoming a Firewise Community in New Jersey, visit the NJ Forest Fire Service's website at: www.njwildfire.org



Pinelands Commission kicks off summer season with new Pinelands Speaker Series

The Pinelands Commission began the summer season by hosting a series of free educational presentations on a variety of Pinelands topics at its headquarters in Pemberton Township.

The new Pinelands Speaker Series kicked off in June with a presentation on the botanical transformation associated with the changing of the seasons in the Pinelands. The presentation, which was delivered by Lynn Chase Shoemaker, drew approximately 20 members of the public and featured an extensive slide show of several areas of the Pinelands during different seasons. Shoemaker taught biology at Southern Regional High School and Ocean County College and has served on the Governor's School on the Environment at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey.

The second presentation, held in July, provided an overview of threatened and endangered animal species in the Pinelands and featured three species of

live snakes: a threatened Northern pine snake, an endangered corn snake and an endangered timber rattlesnake. Matthew McCort of Herpetological Associates delivered the presentation, which drew 65 people, including several members of the Pinelands Commission and more than a dozen children. Participants were allowed to hold both the pine snake and corn snake. The rattlesnake, however, remained in its tank for safety purposes.

The third presentation, slated for August 16, will trace the history and folklore of the Jersey Devil, a creature said to have hooves, a horse's head, bat wings and forked tail that some believe has haunted the area for centuries. It will be delivered by James F. McCloy, who co-authored "The Jersey Devil" in 1976 and "Phantom of the Pines: More Tales of the Jersey Devil" in 1998, and has appeared on many radio and television programs and in numerous newspaper articles.

Organized and sponsored by the Pinelands Commission, the Pinelands Speaker Series seeks to raise awareness and appreciation of the natural, cultural and historic resources of the New Jersey Pinelands.

All of the speakers are members of the Pinelands Speakers Directory, a listing of



Daniel McBride, 16, got an up close look at a threatened Northern pine snake during a July 12 presentation of the Pinelands Speaker Series.

Photo/Paul Leakan

presenters who have extensive experience and knowledge of various Pinelands topics such as plants, animals, culture, archaeology, folklore, recreation and ecology. The Pinelands Speakers Directory can be downloaded from the Commission's Web site (www.nj.gov/pinelands).

"The Pinelands Commission has experienced great success in carrying out educational programs such as the annual Pinelands Short Course, which attracted a record crowd of 450 people this March," said John C. Stokes, Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission. "The Pinelands Speaker Series has provided another great opportunity for people of all ages and backgrounds to learn about this special part of our country."



Matthew McCort, pictured left, brought several species of live snakes to his presentation on threatened and endangered species of the Pinelands. Photo/Paul Leakan





Commission proposes five amendments to Pinelands plan

The Pinelands Commission recently proposed five amendments to the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP), the rules that govern land-use, development and natural resource protection in the Pinelands.

The Commission is slated to consider whether to approve the amendments during its regular meeting in August.

The proposed amendments pertain to regulations relating to nonconforming uses, accessory recycling centers, the pilot program for alternate septic treatment systems, escrows and the withdrawal of applications for development.

The first proposed amendment stipulates that a nonconforming use

would be considered abandoned if it were to be voluntarily ceased or discontinued for a period of two years. The amendment also defines the term “nonconforming use.”

The second amendment clarifies that accessory recycling centers should be permitted in the Preservation Area District and Forest Area only at those existing resource extraction sites and manufacturing sites that are within one mile of a Regional Growth Area or Pinelands Town.

The third amendment includes a series of changes to the alternate design treatment systems pilot program.

Under the fourth amendment, the escrow requirements would be

expanded to allow the Executive Director to require escrows not only for development applications but for other matters pending before the Commission.

The fifth amendment would revise the requirement to indicate that direct activity in furtherance of an application must occur within two years of the Commission’s request for information or that application will be deemed withdrawn.

The proposed amendments are available for review on the Commission’s Web site: www.nj.gov/pinelands/cmp/amend.

The CMP has guided land-use and development in the state-designated Pinelands Area since it took effect on January 14, 1981.



Commission signs agreement to end direct discharge of treated wastewater into Pinelands stream

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against future development. These lands include large parcels in sensitive subwatersheds, including the Deep Run subwatershed. This satisfies a legal requirement for an equivalent level of protection. In exchange for providing this necessary offset, the BBMUA will grant Buena Vista Township a share of the total wastewater flow allocation to facilitate the extension of sewer service in the Township along U.S. Route 40. This will also enable Buena Vista Township to eliminate wastewater discharge from septic systems in the area.



White water lilies bloom in an irrigation ditch located adjacent to cranberry bogs along Route 563 in Washington Township, Burlington County, in the Pinelands. Photo/Paul Leakan



Pinelands Commission plays key role in National Environmental Health Conference

More than 800 environmental health professionals gathered in Atlantic City for the National Environmental Health Association's Annual Education Conference and Exhibition on June 18-22. The conference provided an opportunity to showcase the Pinelands Commission's initiatives to protect water quality through management of onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS). Of the 14 presentations in the onsite wastewater division, two were presented on behalf of the Pinelands Commission. The conference was highlighted by a half-day field trip to visit operating alternative OWTS and a cedar wetland.

Ed Wengrowski, Wastewater Management Coordinator for the Pinelands Commission, presented a detailed description of the Pinelands alternative onsite wastewater treatment systems pilot program, including the program's objectives and a review of water quality performance data for the systems that have been installed

and monitored in the Pinelands during the past five years.

Wengrowski also coordinated and led a field trip to the Presidential Lakes area in Pemberton Township to provide approximately 30 participants with first-hand experience with the alternative OWTS pilot program. Pemberton Township currently has the highest concentration of alternative OWTS in the Pinelands; 36 alternative systems have been installed in this Township under the Pinelands Commission pilot project.

Representatives from treatment system manufacturers and distributors demonstrated the operation of Amphidrome, Bioclear, and Cromaglass alternative OWTS in homeowners' backyards.

BioMicrobics systems are approved, but not yet installed, so they brought the treatment components to the field visit on a truck and explained the operation of their system. The process for design and permitting of these systems in the Pinelands was also discussed.

"The cooperation of the homeowners to allow a group of 30 professionals to visit their backyards was greatly appreciated," Wengrowski said.

The Pinelands Commission's onsite wastewater management consultants, Bruce Douglas, P.E., Stone Environmental, Inc., and Elizabeth Dietzmann, J.D., described the process of how they are characterizing the cur-

rent legal and regulatory framework pertaining to OWTS to assist Pinelands Area municipalities in the development of onsite wastewater management strategies.

On the way back from Pemberton Township to Atlantic City, the bus stopped at the Webb's Mill Bog Cedar Swamp in the Greenwood Wildlife Management Area to allow the visitors to see first-hand the sensitive ecology that the alternative OWTS pilot program was designed to protect. Numerous wildflowers were blooming as the group walked along the boardwalk through the wetland area.

Stone Environmental took advantage of the gathered expertise to hold an open Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting to solicit input regarding the reality and perceptions regarding management of OWTS in the Pinelands Area. The TAC meeting was held in the Tropicana Hotel, immediately following the technical presentations on the second day of the conference. Among the 15 attendees, local participants included mayors of two townships, an environmental commission chairperson, a local OWTS engineering consultant; local alternative OWTS distributors, a county planning official and several Pinelands Area septic system owners.

"The Pinelands is on the cutting edge of technology when it comes to onsite wastewater treatment systems technology, and we were grateful for an opportunity to share our experiences with the broader environmental health community," Wengrowski said.



Participants in the field trip discussed the operation of a Pinelands alternative onsite wastewater treatment system.

Photo/Joel Mott





18th annual Pinelands Short Course draws record crowd

The 2007 Pinelands Short Course was one for the record books, drawing the largest crowd in the 18-year history of the educational event.

Held on March 3 at Burlington County College, the Short Course attracted 450 attendees. The event

Save the Date

19th annual
Pinelands Short
Course
March 1, 2008
Burlington
County College

featured 15 new programs, along with 11 popular programs from the past. The new topics included Pinelands entomology,

butterflies, canoeing and kayaking, Pinelands curricula, cranberry history, Pinelands culture, community planning, and a guided field trip at the Franklin Parker Preserve, a 9,400 acre property located in the

heart of the Pinelands.

Many attendees rated the program very highly, noting the abundance of new course offerings and the considerable knowledge of presenters.

The Short Course is sponsored by the Pinelands Commission and Burlington County College, which has hosted the event at its Pemberton Township campus for the past four years. The event is registered with the New Jersey Department of Education, and professional development credits are available to New Jersey teachers who attend.

“We’re thrilled to see such strong



Pinelands Commission Chairperson Betty Wilson, pictured left, greeted a record crowd of 450 people during the 18th annual Pinelands Short Course at Burlington County College.

Photo/Paul Leakan

interest in the Pinelands and the Pinelands Short Course,” said Joel Mott, the Commission’s Public Programs Specialist. “The more people learn about the Pinelands, the more people will know why it is so important to protect.”

Livable Community Plan completed in Egg Harbor Township

A Livable Community Plan was recently finalized in Egg Harbor Township in conjunction with the Pinelands Commission’s “Pinelands Excellence Program.”

In January 2005, the Commission received a grant from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation to work with Egg Harbor Township to undertake a community planning process. The objective was to involve Township residents in a collaborative and inclusive process to identify a vision for the town’s growth and, with assistance from a professional planning team, define, formulate and “fit” a series of implementation strategies to the municipality’s particular needs.

The Livable Community Plan’s con-

clusions, evolved through a year-long planning process, fits three categories:

1) Focus growth to reinforce the Township’s traditional village patterns and enhance community identity by concentrating growth in mixed use centers while conserving areas that still retain woodland character. Such centers will help create a commercial core, reduce service demands, provide for alternative housing options, reduce congestion, and create opportunities for alternative transportation modes;

2) Conserve and enhance environmental resources, expand open space and recreation by conserving areas within or adjacent to wetlands, limiting maximum site coverage, promoting clustering and conserving existing trees and vegetation;

and

3) Improve circulation and promote alternatives to automobile use by expanding and linking pedestrian facilities throughout the Township to existing sidewalks and offer more recreation and safe pedestrian transportation opportunities.

The Livable Community Plan was presented to the Egg Harbor Township Committee in March 2007, and the Committee has referred it to the township’s Planning Board for action to prioritize and implement strategies that are contained in the Plan. The Commission looks forward to working with the Township to assist in the effort once the community’s project priorities are established.



Manchester Township adopts rezoning ordinance implementing recommendations of the Toms River Corridor Natural Resource Protection Plan

Manchester Township has adopted an ordinance and master plan amendment that revises the township's Regional Growth Area zoning plan to implement the recommendations of the Toms River Corridor Natural Resource Protection Plan.

The ordinance, adopted in May 2007, includes provisions for mandatory wetlands buffers, the use of Pinelands Development Credits and higher density age-restricted planned retirement communities in portions of the town's Regional Growth Area. The ordinance also provides for the intermunicipal transfer of development from designated environmentally-sensitive properties in Jackson Township to land more appro-

priate for development in Manchester Township. Additionally, the ordinance provides for the continuation of a 600-foot buffer along the main branch of the Toms River in order to ensure the protection of threatened and endangered upland plant and animal species. This expanded wildlife corridor was previously implemented by Jackson Township along both the Toms River and Ridgeway Branch.

The Pinelands Commission will schedule a public hearing on the zoning ordinance and master plan amendment. Following the public hearing, Commission staff will prepare a recommendation on whether the full Commission should certify the

Manchester master plan and ordinance, as well as a companion ordinance from Jackson Township.

The changes are part of a series of recommendations included in a special sub-regional conservation planning project that was coordinated by the Pinelands Commission. The recommendations included in the Toms River Corridor Natural Resource Protection Plan are the culmination of two years of cooperative work by municipal officials, Commission staff and a team of representatives from non-profit, county, state and federal agencies. The Plan was completed in February 2004.



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