

**MINUTES OF THE
NATURAL LANDS TRUST MEETING
March 24, 2023
12:00 PM
Via Video and Teleconference**

Chairman Catania called the meeting to order at 12:05 PM. A quorum of trustees was present. At least one of the trustees was a state governmental representative.

The Open Public Meetings Act notice was provided as follows: Notice of the date, time, location, and agenda, to the extent known, was forwarded to three newspapers of general circulation, and provided to the Secretary of State in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act. In addition, notice was provided on the Trust's website in compliance with the Act requiring State, regional, and local authorities, boards, and commissions to establish a website providing specific information to facilitate transparency in government.

In attendance were:

Michael Catania, Chairperson
Anne Heasley, Vice Chairperson
Senator Bob Smith, State House
Commission representative, Trustee
Judeth Yeany, DEP Trustee
Larry Torok, DEP Trustee
Emile DeVito, Trustee
Margaret Waldock, Trustee

Eileen Murphy, Trustee
Hannah Good, Trustee representative for the
State Treasurer
Robert Jackson, Trustee
Robert J. Cartica, Executive Director
Jason Hafstad, Trust Staff
Terry Schmidt, Trust Staff
Cari Wild, Secretary/Treasurer

Absent: Trustee representative for the DEP
Commissioner

Guests:

Kris Schantz, DEP
Fred Akers, Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association
Brooke Handley, Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association
Jason Howell, Pinelands Preservation Alliance
Mike Kaliss

General Public Comment:

Ms. Handley and Mr. Akers reported on efforts by the Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association to help steward the Trust's Hamilton Preserve including plans to install guard rails to impede ATV trespassing and work on watershed-wide municipal ordinances to strengthen policies against ATVs. For example, on March 20, 2023, Hamilton Township, Atlantic County adopted an ordinance authorizing police to confiscate illegally ridden ATVs and dirt bikes. The Trust's Board thanked them for their efforts and support.

Mr. Howell advised the Trust about an opportunity to acquire lands adjacent to the Pomona Woods Preserve.

Financial Report: Mr. Cartica outlined the Financial Statements for the quarters ending September 30 and December 31, 2022. Senator Smith motioned to approve the Financial Statements. Ms. Waldock seconded the motion, and the Financial Statements were unanimously approved by a vote of 10 to 0.

The **September 16, 2022 Minutes** were reviewed. Mr. DeVito motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Torok seconded the motion, and the minutes were unanimously approved by a vote of 10 to 0.

Unfinished Business:

Mr. Catania and Ms. Wild provided the Board with a **Petty's Island, Pennsauken Township, Camden County Status Report**. Since 2015, the William Penn Foundation has provided grant funding for environmental educational programming at Petty's Island, which we used to hire our current programming provider, the Center for Aquatic Sciences (CAS). The current grant expires on April 30, 2023. The Trust has applied for a new grant in the amount of \$109,000 which would cover an additional two years of CAS programming as well as community engagement activities through a new hourly employee, Linda Cairnes, who was formerly with CAS.

The DEP has been insisting on remediation to ecological standards after deeming the island's uplands an ecologically sensitive natural resource (ESNR). CITGO's Licensed Site Remediation Professional (LSRP) has proposed remedial action(s) based upon non-residential or alternate-based (recreational) standards. Recently, however, CITGO feels it has been able to moot the issue of huge areas of the island being considered as ENSRs by mowing down lots of phragmites and other vegetation to create "lawn." Apparently, lawn qualifies as an exemption from the ESNR designation while still preserving the habitat and retaining the option of allowing these areas to become fields or forests at a later date.

CITGO recently completed additional soil and sediment sampling in the former oil storage tank impoundments, as well as along the perimeter of the island, and is optimistic that these sampling results will not result in any significant expansion of remediation.

Based on all of this, CITGO seems more optimistic than ever that they will be successful in getting DEP approval of the cleanup plan proposed by its LSRP and the possibility of CITGO completing the cleanup and conveying the island to the Trust sometime in the next 2-3 years or so.

Ms. Waldock, Chair of the Petty's Island Committee, held a meeting on October 21, 2022 to discuss the challenges and future vision of the island. Future meetings will be scheduled.

New Business:

Introduction: Mr. Cartica introduced the Trust's new Land Manager, Jason Hafstad.

Mr. Cartica presented the **Spending Authorization for Calendar Year 2023**. This year's authorization includes several species- or habitat-specific inventories as well as land management projects, including those to limit illegal ATV access. Mr. Jackson motioned to approve the Spending Authorization for Calendar Year 2023. Senator Smith seconded the motion, and the 2023 Spending Authorization was unanimously approved by a vote of 10 to 0. Senator Smith noted his intention to seek funding for the Trust in the state budget to hire a Volunteer Coordinator to supplement the Trust's work to protect New Jersey's biodiversity.

Mr. Cartica presented the Board with the **Tennessee Gas Pipeline (TGP) Plant Fund-2023 Work Plan**. Trustees were advised that use of this funding is mostly at the discretion of State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites even if trustees feel the proposed work is unnecessary. It was noted that the budget includes funding of a deer enclosure fencing pilot project in a location within High Point State Park yet to be determined. Mr. Catania, Mr. DeVito, and Ms. Waldock noted examples of successful deer enclosures at the Watchung Reservation and Duke Farms in New Jersey. Mr. DeVito motioned to approve the TGP Plant Fund-2023 Work Plan. Mr. Torok seconded the motion, and the 2023 Work Plan was unanimously approved by a vote of 10 to 0.

Mr. Cartica presented the Board with the **Tennessee Gas Pipeline (TGP) Animal Fund-Timber Rattlesnake and Eastern Copperhead Multi-Year Work Plan**. The Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP) has submitted a request and supporting documents (per our MOU with NJ Fish & Wildlife) for the release of \$870,000 from the TGP Animal Fund being held in trust by the Natural Lands Trust. The request proposes that the ENSP will use a maximum of \$500,000 for one or more grants focused on eastern copperhead (formerly northern copperhead) and an additional \$370,000 for a contract with Rutgers University. According to our MOU, the ENSP must submit approved meeting minutes from the Endangered and Nongame Species Advisory Committee (ENSAC) regarding the use of these funds. ENSP has provided documentation that ENSAC was presented with and approved the objectives of the projects and the total available funds to be used. Mr. Torok noted that if eastern copperhead is federally listed as threatened, as expected, it will be regulated, and knowledge of its habitat will be critical to maintaining and protecting this species in New Jersey. Mr. Torok motioned to approve the TGP Timber Rattlesnake and Eastern Copperhead Multi-Year Work Plan. Mr. DeVito seconded the motion, and the Multi-Year Work Plan was unanimously approved by a vote of 10 to 0.

Ms. Wild presented the **Draft 2022 Annual Report** text, highlighting the Trust's success during 2022 in designating two Trust preserves to the Old Growth Forest Network, a national network of old-growth, native forests throughout the U.S. that are protected from logging and are open to the public. It was requested that the Board provide any comments/changes on the draft report within the next thirty days. Ms. Waldock motioned to approve the draft report subject to Board members and staff having the flexibility to incorporate changes. Mr. Jackson seconded the motion, and the 2022 Annual Report was unanimously approved by a vote of 10 to 0.

Ms. Yeany presented the **Nominating Committee (Mr. Catania and Ms. Yeany) Recommendations** for Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary/Treasurer Officers and motioned for their approval. Nominated for Chairperson was Margaret Waldock, Vice Chairperson was Anne Heasley, and Secretary-Treasurer was Cari Wild. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 10 to 0. Senator Smith expressed his gratitude to Mr. Catania

for all of his contributions to the Trust, DEP, and numerous environmental organizations throughout his career.

The currently scheduled dates for 2023 Board meetings are June 9, September 22, and December 1, 2023.

Mr. Catania motioned for the meeting to be adjourned. Mr. DeVito seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:09 PM by a unanimous vote of 10 to 0.

Respectfully submitted,



Cari Wild
Secretary/Treasurer