

Disclaimer

These minutes reflect the actions taken by the Commission during its March 14, 2025 meeting. Although these minutes have been approved by the Commission, no action authorized by the Commission during this meeting, as reflected in these minutes, shall have force or effect until ten (10) days, Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays excepted, after a copy of these minutes has been delivered to the Governor for review, unless prior to expiration of the review period the governor approves same, in which case the action shall become effective upon such approval. These minutes were delivered to the Governor on March 20, 2025.

PINELANDS COMMISSION MEETING

MINUTES
March 14, 2025

All participants were either in-person or present via Zoom conference and the meeting was livestreamed through YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHhUWs7DK5A>

Commissioners Participating in the Meeting

Nicholas Asselta, Alan W. Avery Jr., Deborah Buzby-Cope, Jerome H. Irick, Mark Lohbauer, Mark Mauriello, William Pikolycky, Ryck Signor and Chair Laura E. Matos. Also participating were Executive Director Susan R. Grogan, Deputy Attorney General (DAG) Jay Stypinski and Governor's Authorities Unit representative Alexis Franklin.

Commissioners Absent

John Holroyd, Theresa Lettman, Jonathan Meade, Jessica Rittler Sanchez and Douglas Wallner.

Call to Order

Chair Matos called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

DAG Stypinski read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement (OPMA).

DAG Stypinski administered the oath of office to Ryck Signor, who will serve as Gloucester County's representative.

Executive Director (ED) Grogan called the roll and announced the presence of a quorum. Nine Commissioners participated in the meeting.

The Commission pledged allegiance to the Flag.

Minutes

Chair Matos presented the minutes from the Commission's February 14, 2025 meeting. Commissioner Lohbauer moved the adoption of the minutes. Commissioner Asselta seconded the motion.

The minutes from the February 14, 2025 Commission meeting were adopted by a vote of 8 to 0. Commissioner Signor abstained from the vote.

Committee Reports

Chair Matos provided a summary of the February 28, 2025 Policy and Implementation (P&I) Committee meeting:

The Committee approved the minutes of the January 31, 2025 meeting.

The Committee received a presentation on municipal Fourth Round Affordable Housing obligations, including a brief review of the history of affordable housing. Staff outlined the deadlines and obligations in the new Fair Housing Act Amendments and discussed the Commission's anticipated role in working with Pinelands municipalities to meet the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) and affordable housing objectives.

The Committee also heard a presentation on administering the CMP Threatened and Endangered Species (T&E) standards for both plants and animals. The overview covered the current process of survey protocols and options for new approaches. The Committee discussed the ramifications of maintaining a list of qualified T&E consultants and also in setting criteria for the qualification of consultants. No recommendation for changing the T&E survey protocols or administrative process resulted from the discussion.

Executive Director's Report

ED Grogan provided information on the following matters:

- Commission staff drafted and posted a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Fenwick Manor rehabilitation project and hosted two site visits where architect firms could visit the building. A few firms submitted bids in response to the RFP. The Evaluation Committee will be meeting to rank and score the proposals. It's expected that a resolution making a recommendation to award a contract will be on the Commission's April agenda.
- In late February, proposed CMP amendments related to the Black Run watershed, the establishment of expirations dates for old Certificate of Filings and Waivers, application fees and the Pinelands Development Credit (PDC) program were submitted to the Governor's office for review and approval.

- A private landowner in Burlington County deed restricted approximately 600 acres through the PDC severance process. Almost all of the 120 development rights have been sold.

Commissioner Pikolycky suggested that staff may want to inquire about an energy assessment for Fenwick Manor through the Direct Install program.

Commissioner Irick asked if staff knew the sales price for the recent PDC transaction.

ED Grogan said staff do not know the purchase price for the PDCs.

Chuck Horner, Director of Regulatory Programs, provided information on the following regulatory matters:

- Regulatory Programs staff appreciated the opportunity to provide an overview of the T&E species review process to the P&I Committee. He said the language in the rules may seem abbreviated, however the rules require time and consideration to administer.
- Staff has been working with the YMCA of the Pines located in Medford Township on a proposal to construct two Pre-K childcare centers. Approximately 20 years ago, a rezoning occurred at the YMCA site, and 120 acres were rezoned to a Regional Growth Area to allow a portion of the parcel to be served by public sanitary sewer. A 309-acre portion of the parcel was deed restricted to prevent future development. Medford Township has issued approvals for both childcare centers, one of which is proposed in the deed restricted area of the camp. Staff will continue discuss the matter with both the applicant and Medford Township officials.

April Field, Chief Permit Officer, highlighted a new efficiency measure in the Regulatory Programs that allows the Environmental Specialists to focus more time on reviewing and processing applications. She said two Technical Assistants have been assigned to answer general inquiries received by telephone and respond to questions received by email. She said overall the process is working well and the general public are receiving responses in a timely manner.

Gina Berg, Director of Land Use Programs, provided an update on following:

- The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) will deliver a presentation on the New Jersey Wetland Program Plan at the March 28th P&I Committee meeting.
- Staff will be discussing how the Commission can assist Pinelands municipalities with NJDEP's MS4 stormwater requirement, which requires towns to include watershed improvement plans.

- Staff has been assisting Pemberton Township with eight ordinances that the town adopted between 2021-2024 related to redevelopment, cannabis and Right to Farm. A model ordinance was provided to the town and may resolve many of the adopted ordinances.
- Staff attended a Camden County Agriculture Development Board special meeting. The Agriculture Development Board was interested in the Commission's involvement to maintain consistency with the CMP for designating Agriculture Development Areas in Waterford Township and Winslow Township.

Commissioner Avery asked if the farms in Camden County were traditional farming operations or berry agriculture.

Director Berg said there are a number of berry farms in the Agricultural Production Area but there are other non-berry farms located in the Regional Growth Area and the Rural Development Area.

ED Grogan added that the purpose of the meeting was to determine a mechanism to include isolated farms that are in development areas.

Stacey Roth, Chief, Legal and Legislative Affairs, provided an update on two matters:

- An applicant, Mojave Materials, failed to exhaust administrative remedies and filed an appeal with the New Jersey Superior Court Appellate Division. A motion to dismiss for lack of jurisdiction has been filed on behalf of the Commission.
- Staff held a stakeholder meeting with representatives from the following three utility companies: Atlantic City Electric, Public Service Electric & Gas and Jersey Central Power and Light to discuss the draft rules for Electric Transmission Right-of-Way (ROW) Vegetation Management. The three utilities provided both oral and written comments. A summary of the comments will be presented to the P&I Committee this spring.

Paul Leakan, Communications Officer, thanked staff for their work in preparing the 2024 Annual Report, which is a significant and important undertaking. He also shared [photographs of the 36th Annual Pinelands Short Course](#). He noted that staff will be meeting with Stockton University to discuss ways to improve next year's Short Course and prepare for the Pinelands Summer Short Course scheduled for July 18th.

Public Development Projects and Other Permit Matters

Chair Matos introduced a resolution approving four Public Development applications.

Commissioner Irick made a motion Approving With Conditions Applications for Public Development (Application Numbers 1981-0809.013, 1997-0257.021, 2000-0637.006 & 2006-0247.002) (See Resolution # PC4-24-07). Commissioner Pikolycky seconded the motion.

Director Horner said Egg Harbor City is proposing a three-lot subdivision and no additional development. He said the NJDEP is proposing to pave a driveway at the former Green Bank school in Washington Township. He said the driveway will provide a rear exit from the school to an existing municipal road. He said the NJDEP is also proposing to construct a maintenance building at its Forest Resource Education Center in Jackson Township that was originally constructed in 2001. He noted that the state's nursery is also located on the property.

He said the last Public Development application proposes road improvements to a half-mile section of the Garden State Parkway (GSP) in South Toms River Borough. He said the road improvements include the expansion of a partial interchange to a full interchange at Dover Road. An aerial of the proposed development area was displayed (see attached). He noted that the development will be confined to the GSP Right of Way (ROW), which defines the eastern Pinelands boundary. He said the GSP ROW is located in the Parkway Overlay District. He said the length of the GSP ROW traverses through a number of Pinelands Management Areas, and the Parkway Overlay District was created to take into consideration the need for improvements to the GSP. Depicted on the map is a blue dot that represents an isolated wetland that is approximately 2,000 square feet. The wetland will be filled as part of this application. He said five stormwater management basins will be constructed, one of which will be located in the median. He said the construction of the project will result in the removal of 3.5 acres of forest vegetation. The road widening will maintain a 25-foot buffer to wetlands.

Mr. Ernest Deman, Regulatory Programs Specialist, said the proposed southbound ramp onto Dover Road is impacting the isolated wetland.

Commissioner Buzby-Cope asked for the exit number of the GSP at which the improvements will occur.

Mr. Deman said the entire project is between exits 80-83 and reiterated that only a half mile of the three-mile project is in the Pinelands Area.

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 9 to 0.

Public Comment on Development Applications and Items Where the Record is Open

Joshua Lehman of Winslow Township spoke in support of his application for a Waiver of Strict Compliance (App. No. 1992-0669.001). He said the property has been in his family since the 1960s. He said the Commission previously approved a Waiver for the property that has since expired. He said he plans to build a single-family dwelling on the parcel for his family.

Ordinances Not Requiring Commission Action

ED Grogan highlighted a few ordinances not requiring action by the Commission:

- Hamilton Township Ordinance 2093-2024 adopts a Redevelopment Plan for a small lot in a Regional Growth Area.

- Monroe Township Ordinance O:58-2024 provides revisions to home occupations.
- Pemberton Township Ordinance 43-2024 amends the Browns Mills Town Center Redevelopment Plan to permit supermarkets with drive-thru service and gas stations.

Lastly, ED Grogan noted that Weymouth Township adopted a 2024 Master Plan Reexamination Report that included a draft ordinance for domestic farm animals.

Commissioner Asselta asked about the Vineland City Ordinance listed in the memo.

ED Grogan said the ordinance clarifies standards related to temporary use permits that are associated with debris storage areas should a damaging storm occur.

Other Resolutions

Chair Matos introduced a resolution to Approve the Commission's 2024 Annual Report.

Commissioner Pikolycky made a motion To Approve the Pinelands Commission's 2024 Annual Report (See Resolution # PC4-24-08). Commissioner Lohbauer seconded the motion.

ED Grogan said the annual report is required by the Pinelands Protection Act and Executive Order. She highlighted important work undertaken by the Commission during 2024. She said in 2024, the Commission began administering the new requirements associated with the Kirkwood-Cohansey rules (water management). She said the Commission issued the five-year Long Term Economic Monitoring Program report. The Commission entered into two Memoranda of Agreements for accessible trails. In 2024, the majority of applications received were for residential development. Commission staff organized a hybrid training session for municipal officials. The Science office continued to monitor water levels throughout the Pinelands Area and track snakes and turtles. Staff educated thousands of people through the two Short Course events, Pinelands Speaker Series and in-class education programs. Staff also shared thousands of photos and dozens of videos on Instagram, X and YouTube (attached presentation slides). Click [here](#) to read the Annual Report.

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 9 to 0.

General Public Comment

John Volpa, Evesham Township, NJ, spoke about the health benefits associated with open spaces and the correlation between nature and mental well-being. He said he hopes the Commission can continue to work with Evesham Township to provide accessible trails for individuals with mobility challenges at the Black Run Preserve. He spoke about an initiative called Vets and Nature. He also noted the importance of having trails with bathroom facilities (full comments are attached).

America Phillips, Pemberton Township, NJ, said she walks at the trail located in Pemberton Borough because she does not feel safe to walk on roads. She said all trails in Burlington County

should have bathrooms and they should be handicap-accessible bathrooms. She noted the importance of preserving and taking care of what we have for the next generation.

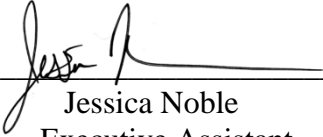
Heidi Yeh of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance (PPA) welcomed Commissioner Signor to the Commission. She congratulated the Commission on a successful Pinelands Short Course. She shared copies of PPA's State of the Pinelands report. She said this year's report focuses on the PPA's 35-year history rather than the usual thumbs down or thumbs up, as in past reports. She said PPA has grown from a watchdog organization to a multi-faceted organization involved in accessible trails, sustainable farming, native landscapes, and public lands work. She said PPA looks forward to the next 35 years of working with the Commission.

Stephen Elliott of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance thanked the Commission staff for completing the Black Run rule proposal and providing to the Governor's office. He apologized if his previous comments were harsh. He also congratulated the Commission on the Short Course. He said he attended the lecture on the current drought situation, and he hopes it will serve as a wake-up call.

Adjournment

Commissioner Pikolycky moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Lohbauer seconded the motion. The Commission agreed to adjourn at 10:42 a.m.

Certified as true and correct:



Jessica Noble
Executive Assistant

Date: March 20, 2025

Dover Road (Route 530)

Route 9

Garden State Parkway

2024 Annual Report



March 14, 2025

2024 Annual Report

- Required by the Pinelands Protection Act and Executive Order.
- The 33-page report highlights the Commission's work during the 2024 calendar year.



2024 Planning Activities

The Pinelands Commission began implementing new rules in 2024 that strengthen protections of the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer, a freshwater reservoir that underlies the Pinelands and contains an estimated 17 trillion gallons of water.



2024 Planning Activities

Climate Resilience

The Commission's Climate Committee met three times in 2024, focusing its discussion on the potential impact and applicability of other state agency rulemaking in the Pinelands Area.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities' dual use solar pilot program, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's (NJDEP) 2024 Statewide Water Supply Plan and NJDEP's proposed Resilient Environments and Landscapes (REAL) amendments.

The Committee also completed a comprehensive review of Pinelands management area boundaries to identify areas designated for growth that are vulnerable to climate change.

2024 Planning Activities

Accessible Trails

In 2024, the Commission executed memoranda of agreement (MOA) with Pemberton Township, Burlington County, and Stafford Township, Ocean County, to facilitate surfacing of existing trails on public lands, in the Pinelands Area.

The goal was to provide a stable surface for those with ambulatory challenges and recognize the grant funding that has been provided by other state departments for such projects. The trails are located in wetlands and/or required wetlands buffer areas; therefore, a deviation from the Commission's rules needed to be approved in order for the proposed surfacing (paving) to be permitted.



Forecastle Lake

2024 Planning Activities

In July 2024, the Commission issued its 2022 Long Term Economic Monitoring Report, which provides economic data and describes key trends in the areas of population, real estate, economic growth, and municipal finance.

The 2022 Report includes data from 2018-2022 applicable to the Pinelands Area and surrounding communities in South Jersey.

The report shows that Pinelands municipalities have recovered well from the COVID-19 pandemic, in terms of unemployment and wage rates, and are faring similarly to other parts of New Jersey in several economic indicators.

New Jersey Pinelands Commission Long Term Economic Monitoring Program

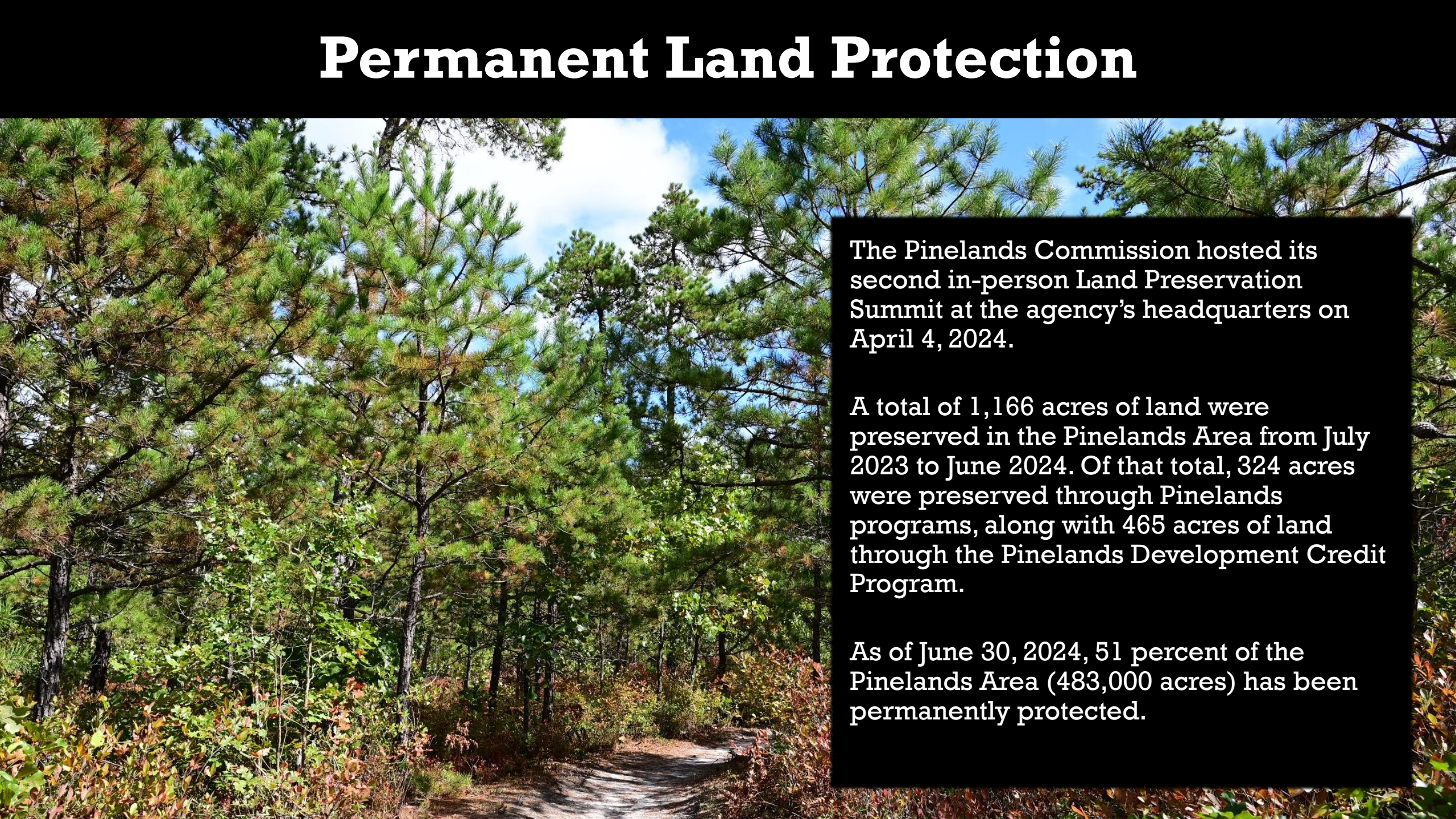


2018-2022 Report

Laura E. Matos, Chair

Susan R. Grogan, Executive Director

Permanent Land Protection

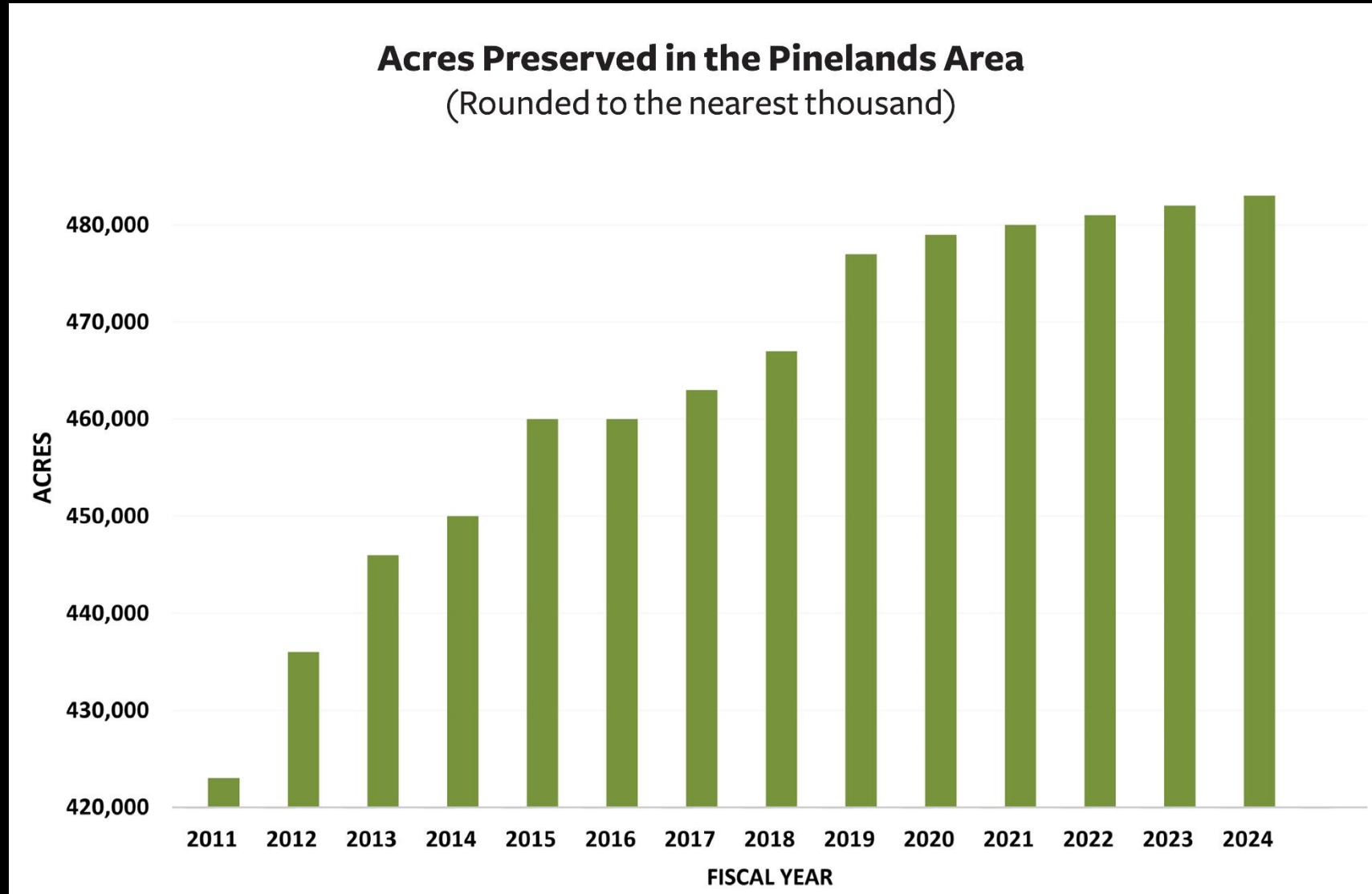


The Pinelands Commission hosted its second in-person Land Preservation Summit at the agency's headquarters on April 4, 2024.

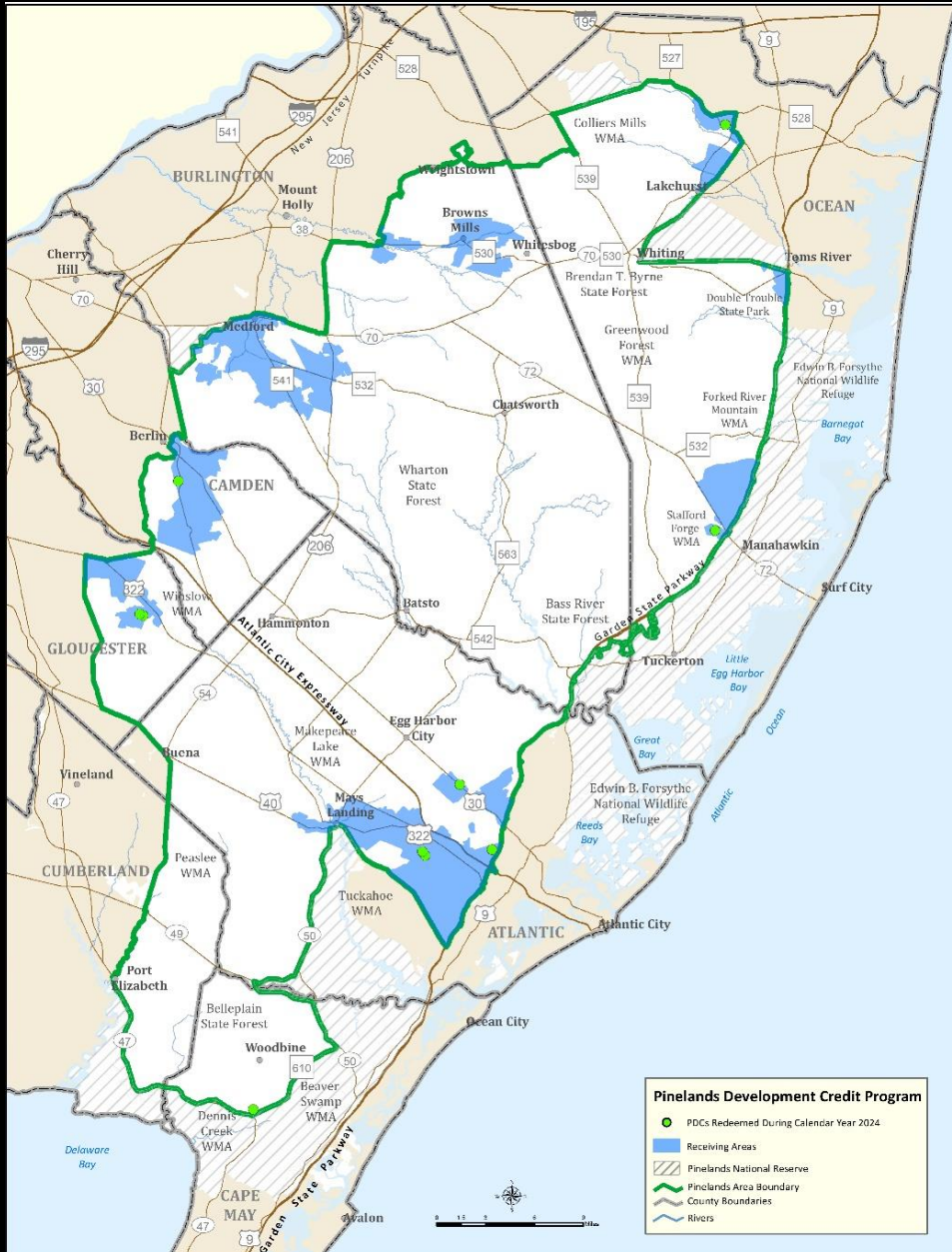
A total of 1,166 acres of land were preserved in the Pinelands Area from July 2023 to June 2024. Of that total, 324 acres were preserved through Pinelands programs, along with 465 acres of land through the Pinelands Development Credit Program.

As of June 30, 2024, 51 percent of the Pinelands Area (483,000 acres) has been permanently protected.

Permanent Land Protection



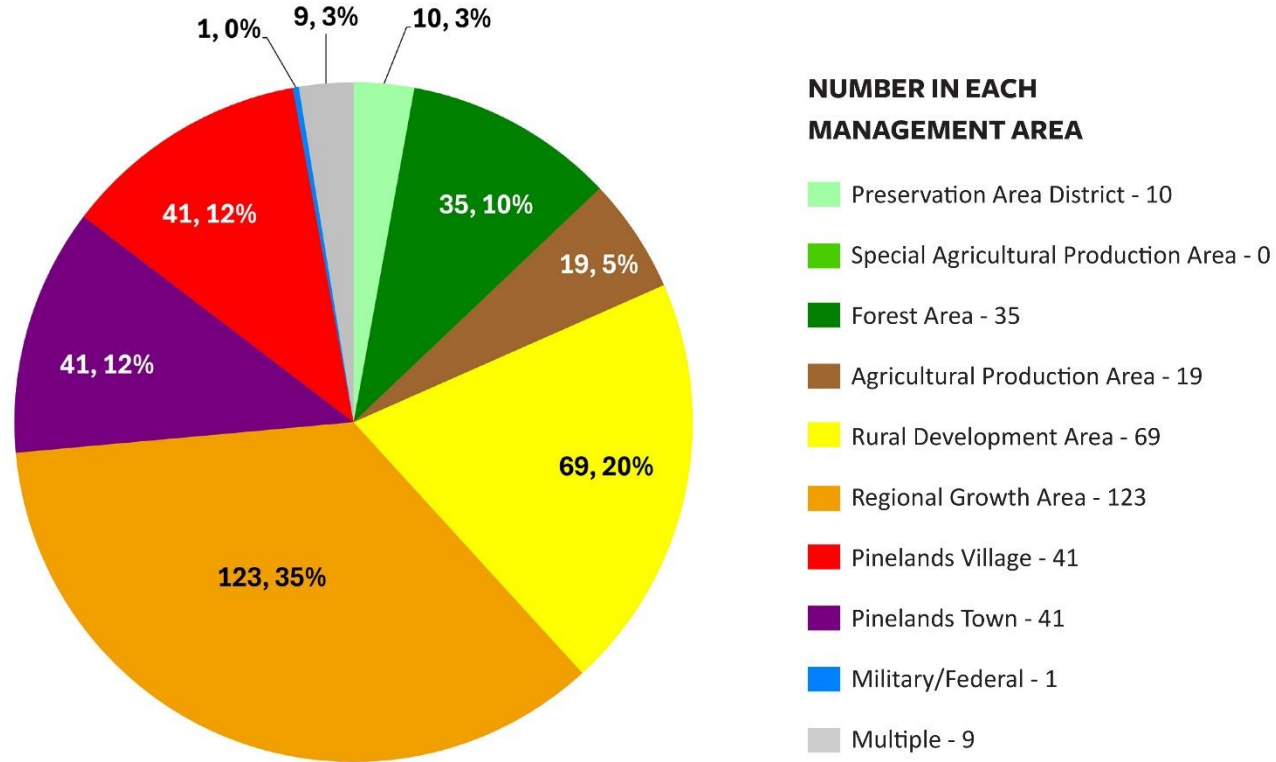
Pinelands Development Credit Program 2024 Activity



- During 2024, 72.12 PDCs were allocated by the Commission to 28 sending area properties. A total of 12 PDCs were severed, protecting a total of 281 acres of land.
- In 2024, a total of 10.25 PDCs were sold, with an average sales price of \$86,758 per PDC. This represents a significant increase over the 2023 average sales price of \$73,242.
- A total of 14.25 PDCs were redeemed for 10 residential projects ranging in size from one to 657 units and involving a variety of housing types, including single-family detached dwellings, townhouses and apartments.

2024 Regulatory Activities

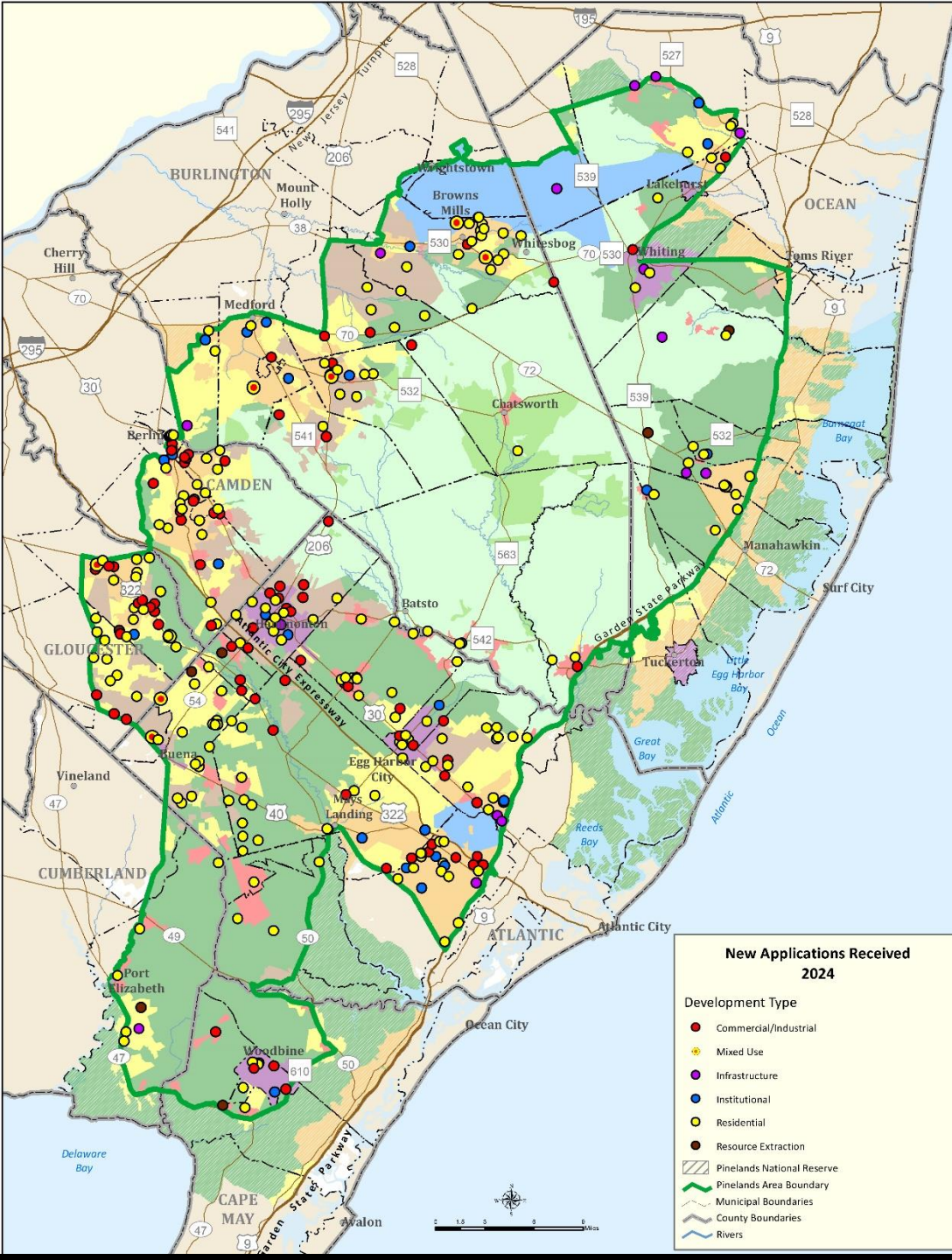
Development Applications Received in 2024 by Management Area



- The Commission received a total of 348 new applications for development in 2024, with the highest percentage of the applications (35%) proposing new development in Pinelands Regional Growth Areas (or RGAs).

2024 Regulatory Activities

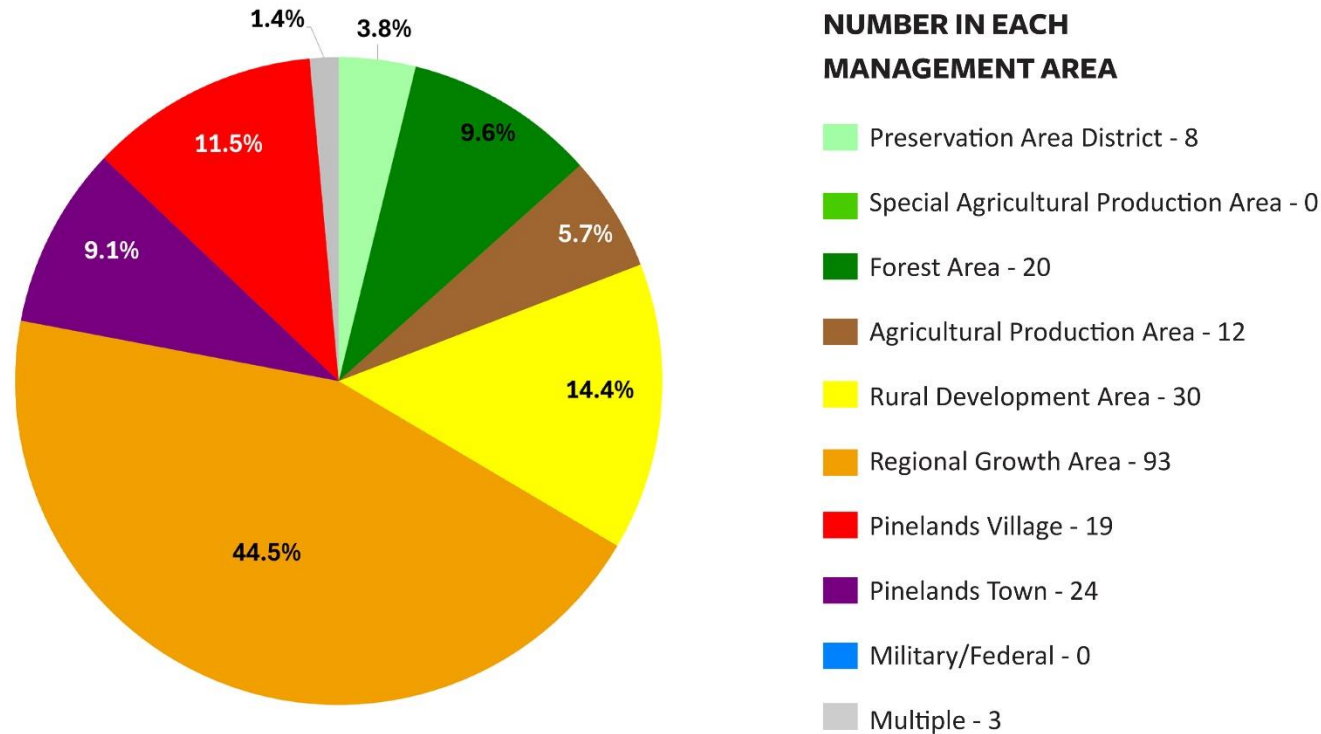
Development Applications Received in 2024 by Development Type	
Development Type	Total
Residential	205
Commercial/Industrial	79
Institutional	30
Infrastructure	18
Mixed Use	9
Resource Extraction	7
Total	348



New Applications Received in 2024

2024 Regulatory Activities

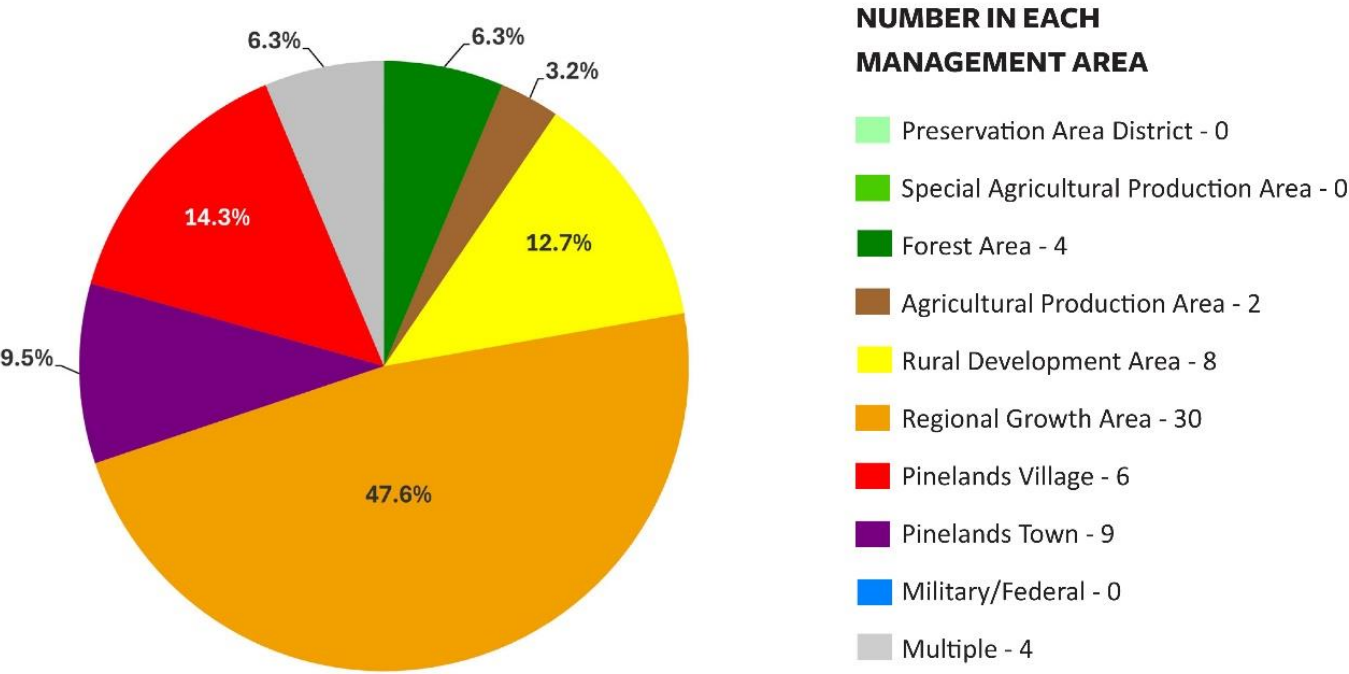
Completeness Documents Issued in 2024 by Management Area



- A total of 209 Completeness Documents were issued in 2024, including Certificates of Filing, Preliminary Zoning Permits and Notices of Filing. Most Completeness Documents issued in 2024 (93 or 44.5%) were for proposed development in RGAs, with another 21% in Pinelands Towns and Villages.

2024 Regulatory Activities

Final Municipal Site Plan/Subdivision Approvals Allowed to Take Effect in 2024 by Management Area



Final Municipal Site Plan/Subdivision Approvals Allowed to Take Effect in 2024 By Development Type

Development Type	Total
Commercial/Industrial	30
Residential	29
Mixed Use	1
Infrastructure	2
Institutional	1
Total	63

2024 Regulatory Activities

- The Commission approved a total of 16 applications for public development in 2024.
- No waivers were approved by the Commission in 2024, which marks the first year in the Commission's history that no such approvals were issued.
- The Commission's staff provided an in-depth, hybrid training for 70 municipal officials on May 15, 2024.



2024 Science & Research Activities



The Commission advanced numerous research projects, including work on:

Rare Snake Population Monitoring

Snake Fungal Disease

Adenovirus Monitoring

Joint Corn Snake Radio-tracking and Drift Fence Study

Eastern Kingsnake Study

Eastern Box Turtle Study

Long-term Environmental Monitoring
(surveys of frogs and toads and water quality
and water levels)

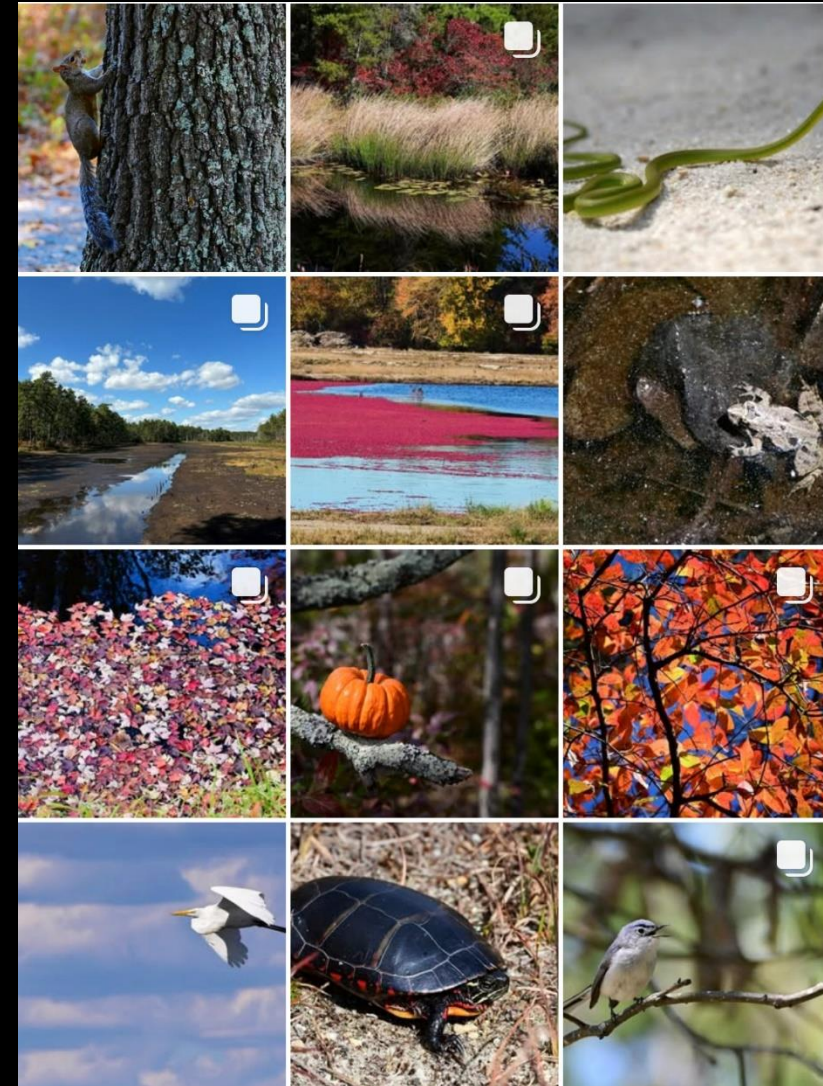


Public Information, Education & Outreach 2024 Activity

- Responded to nearly 1,000 public inquiries;
- Organized two Short Course events and the Pinelands-themed World Water Monitoring Challenge event, which educated a total of more than 700 people;
- Organized three Pinelands Speaker Series talks. The presentations educated approx. 100 people;

Public Information, Education & Outreach 2024 Activity

- Shared 55 videos and 2,307 photographs on the agency's Instagram site and shared 804 Tweets on X. SJ Magazine recognized our Instagram site in its 2024 Best of SJ Awards.
- Uploaded/archived 35 videos that on the Commission's YouTube Channel, garnering 123 new subscribers, 437 shares and 22,300 views for the year; and
- Produced and distributed 1,200 copies of the 2025 Pinelands National Wall Calendar.





2024 Finances

- During 2024, the State Auditor completed the Commission's Audit Report for Fiscal Year 2021 and began work on the Audit Report for Fiscal Year 2022.
- During Fiscal Year 2024, unaudited application fee revenues actually collected totaled \$1,085,112.12 (\$69,573.82 less) than Fiscal Year 2023.
- The Commission netted \$2,189.40 in sales of Pinelands merchandise (mugs, tote bags and note cards) in 2024, while processing a total of 68 transactions. All proceeds go toward a fund for native plants.



Questions?

John Volpa, Founder of the Black Run Preserve, speaking as a private citizen and resident of Evesham Township. Good morning, commissioners.

My previous statements to the Pinelands Commission focused upon the immense environmental value local open space delivers to people living in the West Jersey region. Preserved open space provides important ecological services, such as producing clean air and water, sequestering carbon, protecting biodiversity, and affording flood control. Open space is a key to building sustainable communities. All sustainable communities share three types of value: the environment, people, and economics.

Today, my comments will focus upon the value open space value affords local people, specifically public health. Over the past 30 years the health benefits provided by spending time in Nature are widely recognized:

- Blood pressure is lowered
- Depression and anxiety diminished
- Dopamine flow to the brain improves mood
- The human immune system is boosted

That's naming just a few gifts from nature acquired when being in open spaces. Human beings become healthier in every way by spending time exercising in natural surroundings.

The BRP provides those health benefits for thousands of visitors each year. One of the main reason the BRP has achieved its level of popularity is its accessible 19- mile trail system and portable bathroom facilities. Making open spaces accessible for walking, biking, and a wide variety of low impact activities is an asset to the local community.

The FBRP Ambassadors, of which I am a volunteer, have recently created a new program entitled Veterans and Nature. The program is designed to connect Veterans with the healing power of nature. Studies based upon the experiences of Veterans have identified how the human body keeps the score of past trauma. Time spent in nature is a way to help Vets mitigate that toll held within. The FBRP Vets and Nature Program is just one of many around the nation utilizing open space accessible trails for its value to improve one's emotional and mental health. I urge the PC to support the development of more sustainable trails with sanitary facilities.

I hope the PC continues to work with Evesham Twp to expand the BRP's accessibility for visitors with mobility challenges, so that in the near future, the Friends' Veterans Program will be able to include local Vets with disabilities on its outings. I look forward to attending the PC's Accessible Trails Summit in April and sharing ideas about how communities can help improve public health by utilizing open space for their citizens.