

The PINELANDER

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW JERSEY PINELANDS COMMISSION / WINTER 2012

Richard H. Prickett of Pemberton Township joins Commission

The New Jersey Pinelands Commission gained a new member as Richard H. Prickett of Pemberton Township, Burlington County, was officially sworn in on January 13.

Governor Chris Christie nominated Prickett to fill one of seven gubernatorial seats on the Commission, and the nomination was approved by the state Senate on January 9.

"I am very proud and humbled to have been selected to be a Pinelands Commissioner," Prickett said. "I think it is important that future generations of people can experience the natural beauty and history of the Pinelands the way I have for most of my life. The Pinelands is one of the many natural wonders that make New Jersey a great place to live. I

look forward to serving on the Commission, listening to citizens' points of view and finding ways to solve the challenges that come before the body in ways that sustains our way of life in the Pinelands."

"We're very appreciative of the Governor's appointment of Richard Prickett," said Nancy Wittenberg, the Commission's Executive Director. "Mr. Prickett will provide the Commission with a wealth of knowledge about the Pinelands, and we're pleased to have him on board as we continue to carry out our mission to protect the region's unique resources."



Deputy Attorney General Helene Chudzik (left) administered the oath of office to Richard Prickett, who stands next to his wife, Denise Prickett (right), during a meeting on January 9th.

Prickett has been a member of the Pemberton Township Council since

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Commission approves rules to encourage appropriate siting of solar energy facilities in the Pinelands

The New Jersey Pinelands Commission has approved several rule changes that encourage the development of solar energy facilities in the Pinelands, while safeguarding the region's environment.

Solar energy facilities are universally-permitted as an accessory use throughout the million-acre Pinelands Area of southern New Jersey. During its Oct. 14th meeting, the Commission adopted a series of rule changes that expand opportunities to develop solar energy facilities as a principal use.

"These changes encourage efforts to harness the power of the sun to produce clean energy -- and do so in a manner that protects the Pinelands' special environment," said Nancy Wittenberg, the Commission's Executive Director.

Solar energy systems that are accessory uses supply electricity to the principal use on the property, such as a home or a business, and these types of facilities are already permitted throughout the

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Richard H. Prickett of Pemberton Township joins Commission

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2002. He served as Council President in 2002 and 2006 and was a member of the township's Planning Board from 2003-2005. Prickett retired in 2006 after teaching high school science in the Lakewood School District in Ocean County for 26 years. There, he taught advanced placement biology, environmental science, physical science and chemistry. Prickett was named the Lakewood Township Teacher of the Year in 2004, and he was recognized by the Pinelands Preservation Alliance as an outstanding Pinelands educator in 2005. Since 2003, Prickett has served as a Trustee on the Whitesbog Preservation Trust, and he is currently President



of the Trust's Board.

Prickett holds a bachelor's degree in Life Sciences from Rutgers University and an associate's degree in Psychology from Burlington County College. He fills a seat on the Commission that has been vacant since former Chairperson Betty Wilson resigned in October 2008.

Prickett is among four new Commission members that were appointed by Governor Christie. The others are Mark S. Lohbauer, D'arcy Rohan Green and Gary Quinn. The Governor selected Lohbauer as the Commission's Chairman in September 2011.

The Pinelands Commission is a state agency that oversees land-use, development and natural resource protection in the million-acre Pinelands Area, which covers part

or all of 53 municipalities in Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Ocean counties. The Pinelands is home to an aquifer system that contains an estimated 17-trillion gallons of water, and it provides habitat for more than 1,300 plant and animal species, including 135 rare species.

The 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.



Commission receives federal grant to study pond ecology

Research to assess land-use impacts, prioritize ponds for increased protection

The New Jersey Pinelands Commission has been awarded a federal grant that will help fund a study of Pinelands ponds and provide information needed to better protect them from land-use impacts.

Commission scientists will use the \$350,524 grant, awarded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to assess the ecological integrity of "intermittent" ponds throughout the Pinelands. These ponds are called "intermittent" because they are not connected to streams and occasionally dry out, creating fishless environments that serve as important breeding grounds for frogs and toads such as the rare

Pine Barrens treefrog. Intermittent ponds also provide habitat for many rare plants.

"We are thrilled to receive federal funding for a study that will increase our understanding of Pinelands ponds and their vulnerability to land-use impacts," said Nancy Wittenberg, the Commission's Executive Director. "This information will be used to enhance the protection of these ponds and the important habitats they provide for



The Pinelands Commission will study the ecology of intermittent ponds such as this one in Burlington County
Photo/Kim Laidig

rare species."

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Commission approves rules to encourage appropriate siting of solar energy facilities in the Pinelands

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Pinelands.

Solar energy facilities that are the principal use on a property are generally larger in scale and supply electricity for regional use. These types of facilities have been permitted in Pinelands Regional Growth Areas, Pinelands Towns and, under certain circumstance, Pinelands Villages and Rural Development Areas.

The revisions provide a mechanism to speed the development of accessory solar energy facilities where they would be located on existing structures or installed over existing impervious surfaces. Specifically, the installation of accessory solar energy facilities on existing structures will not constitute development, and therefore will be exempt from the need to file a development application with the Pinelands Commission. Exempting such installations will hasten the local approval process and would eliminate the cost of applying to the Commission for approval.

The rule changes also:

- Authorize Pinelands municipalities to permit solar energy facilities as a principal use in all management areas, provided that all Pinelands environmental standards are met.

- Stipulate special limitations that apply to solar energy facilities installed as a principal use in the Preservation Area District, Special Agricultural Production Area and the Forest Area. The provisions set

forth that such installations in those areas will be limited to three circumstances.

First, installation could be authorized on the parcel of an existing landfill which has been, or will be, closed in accordance with the Commission's landfill closure standards. Second, installation could be authorized on a parcel that has been, or will be, environmentally-remediated of toxic or hazardous wastes or similar substances, provided the remediation has been, or will be, approved by the Commission. The third circumstance applies to the previously disturbed portions of a parcel upon which resource extraction (e.g., sand and gravel mining) has occurred, and for which there is no obligation for site restoration;

- Require that solar energy facilities and associated off-site infrastructure be located and screened to minimize the visual impacts as viewed from wild and scenic rivers and special corridors;

- Limit clearing for the development of new, or the expansion of, existing on-site or off-site infrastructure to that which is necessary to accommodate the solar energy facility in accordance with the Commission's existing clearing and disturbance standards;

- Stipulate special limitations that apply to solar energy facilities installed as a principal use in the Ag-



Recent changes to Pinelands rules provide a mechanism to speed the development of accessory solar energy facilities such as the one above.

Photo/Paul Leakan

ricultural Production Area. Based on these limitations, up to 10 acres of any parcel could be used for such installations. Prime agricultural soils and areas of high ecological integrity must be avoided to the maximum extent feasible; and

- Require that solar energy facilities be decommissioned within 12 months of the cessation of their use. This includes removing all energy facilities, structures and equipment from the parcel.

The development of solar facilities will yield significant benefits to the Pinelands' environment because they will offset the need for new fossil-fuel dependent power plants, thereby reducing atmospheric emissions such as carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, mercury and particulates. Removing these emissions will have a positive impact on public health, crop production, forest health, fish populations and water quality.

The rule changes officially went into effect in January 2012.



Commission working on plans to design proposed Pinelands-themed exhibits at the Richard J. Sullivan Center

The New Jersey Pinelands Commission is close to completing a project to design proposed, Pinelands-themed exhibits that seek to raise awareness and appreciation of the Pinelands and its natural, cultural and historic treasures.

Since February 2011, the Commission has been working with Content Design Collaborative LLC of Scituate, Mass., to design educational exhibits that would be housed as the Commission’s Richard J. Sullivan Center (RJS Center) for Environmental Policy and Education in Pemberton Township, Burlington County. The Commission hired the firm using funds that were provided by the National Park Service.

The proposed exhibits would enhance the Commission’s educational programs, and they would educate visitors about the region’s special resources, while highlighting recreational opportunities.

The design plan calls for relocating the existing receptionist/front desk in the lobby of the RJS Center to make room for a large map of recreation sites and other exhibits.

The main exhibit room would be housed in the 320-square-foot technical center. There, visitors would be able to feel the grains of sand and gravel that make up the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer system. The “uplands” section of the room would detail the vital role of fire in shaping the Pinelands landscape, while exploring the dwarf pine and oak trees found in the Pine Plains, as well as the story of Elizabeth White and her efforts to cultivate the blueberry. The “wetlands” section would focus on rare plants and animals, such as the Pine Barrens treefrog, as well as cranberry agriculture. A large aquarium of native Pinelands fish would be featured in the “surface waters” section of the exhibit.



The exhibits shown above feature sculptures and interactive displays that highlight the region’s geology, uplands, wetlands and surface waters.

Photo/Content Design Collaborative

The Commission is currently refining and finalizing the exhibit text and graphics.

After the designs are completed, the Commission will begin efforts to secure funding to fabricate and install the exhibits, followed by a marketing campaign to draw more visitors to the RJS Center.



Commission receives federal grant to study pond ecology

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During the course of the 4 1/2 year research project, Commission scientists will map the location of ponds, document off-road vehicle activity, monitor water quality and hydrology, survey plant and animal assemblages and quantify the impact of land use on these ponds.

The Commission will identify and prioritize ponds that need enhanced

protection. This includes ponds that have been damaged by the illegal use of off-road vehicles, which may be addressed through increased enforcement. Additionally, the Commission may evaluate potential planning and regulatory measures to better protect these ponds.

The Commission will supplement the EPA grant funding by contributing \$116,841 from its Pinelands Conservation Fund. The 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 fund was established to further the Pinelands protection program and ensure a greater level of protection of the unique resources of the Pinelands Area.



23rd annual Pinelands Short Course to feature 18 new educational presentations, including four field trips

The 23rd annual Pinelands Short Course will feature 42 presentations, including 18 new programs that will explore the region's unique history, ecology, culture and music.

"From fossils to forests, this year's Pinelands Short Course offers an impressive variety of educational programs," said Nancy Wittenberg, the Commission's Executive Director. "Interest in this event remains strong, and it goes beyond our borders, with some attendees traveling from several states away. We're pleased to see so many people care about this incredible 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. To be held at BCC's Pemberton Township campus on March 24, the program 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 features 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 discussion of dinosaurs and fossils on the fringes of the Pinelands, as well as presentations on black bears, timber rattlesnakes, turtles, research of northern pine snakes, southern pine beetles, ancient climate change and periglacial landscapes, forests, environmental and ecological research in Barnegat Bay, the grass-roots of the Pinelands preservation

movement, wild and scenic rivers in the Pinelands, Elias Wright (a teacher, military leader and surveyor), the Jersey Devil, planning an ecosystem garden, Piney agriculture, a photographic journey of the Pinelands and rarely seen, historic videos that document the old cranberry harvesting process and the lives of migrant workers at Double Trouble State Park.

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, bird ecology, ruby-throated hummingbirds and how to attract them, ospreys, rain gardening, the health benefits of blueberries and cranberries, stream assessment, photographing the Pinelands, building and installing a rain barrel, Piney lifestyles, the Still Family, a virtual tour of the region, wilderness survival, and Double Trouble State Park.

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 other field trips will provide a living his-



Last year's Pinelands Short Course attracted more than 600 people. Photo/Paul Leakan

tory and walking tour of nearby Whitesbog Village, and a leisurely, two-hour guided walk of the Franklin Parker Preserve, a 9,400-acre ecological gem located in Chatsworth.

Participants should register early to help ensure that they receive their first course selections.

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.

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 Commission's Web site. The address is: www.nj.gov/pinelands. Please see page 6 for a full list of presentations.





List of presentations for the 23rd annual Pinelands Short Course

- “Know the Bear Facts”/Black Bears in New Jersey
- New Jersey’s Biodiversity
- Pinelands Frogs and Toads
- Pinelands Fish
- Timber Rattlesnakes of the Pine Barrens
- Bird Ecology of the Pine Barrens
- Turtles of the Pinelands
- Research on Northern Pine Snakes in New Jersey
- Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and How to Attract Them
- NJ Osprey Project
- Great Bay Terrapin Project
- Southern Pine Beetles
- Rain Garden Site Selection, Installation and Plants
- Gardening for Wildlife in the Pinelands
- Ecosystem Gardening
- Planning Your Ecosystem Garden
- Forest Modeling in the Pinelands
- Health Benefits of Blueberries and Cranberries
- Environmental and Ecological Research in Barnegat Bay
- “Beauty of the Bogs”: Grassroots of the Pinelands Preservation Movement
- Pinelands: A Visual Journey
- Stream Assessment
- Photographing the Pinelands: Locations, Equipment and Techniques
- Building and Installing a Rain Barrel for Your Home
- Wild and Scenic Rivers in the Pinelands
- Elias Wright: Teacher, Military Leader, Surveyor Extraordinaire
- Piney Lifestyles
- Piney Agriculture
- The Still Family: A Pinelands Story of Survival, Service and Success
- Pinelands Panorama: A Virtual Tour
- Discovering Wilderness Survival
- The Last Pine Barrens Charcoal Makers
- Double Trouble State Park
- Double Trouble in Black and White
- The Jersey Devil
- Earth, Wind & Ice: Ancient Climate Change and Periglacial Landscapes
- Tunes and Tales of the Pinelands
- Music by Home Cookin’
- Rancocas Creek Canoe Eco-tour
- Whitesbog Walking Tour
- Whitesbog Living History
- Exploring the Franklin Parker Preserve

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

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