



NEW JERSEY PINELANDS COMMISSION

MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT



Native, state-endangered, globally rare swamp pink lilies blooming in April

APRIL 2022

1 EXECUTIVE OFFICE

1.1 ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

1.1A COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- **Personnel & Budget (P&B) Committee:** The P&B Committee did not meet in April. The Committee's next meeting is on June 14, 2022.
- **Pinelands Climate Committee:** The Climate Committee did not meet in April. The Committee's next meeting is on May 27, 2022.
- **Policy & Implementation (P&I) Committee:** The P&I Committee met on April 29, 2022, and it reviewed Winslow Township's revised zoning plan for the Route 73 corridor in the Regional Growth Area. The Committee voted to recommend certification of the Winslow master plan and ordinance amendments by the full Commission. The Committee also discussed priorities and schedules for potential Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) amendments in FY2023 and beyond. The Committee endorsed the CMP amendment recommendations presented by the Acting Executive Director (click [here](#) for the presentation). Committee members advocated for consideration of additional amendments, including those related to Horizontal Directional Drilling, utility distribution line exemptions and application requirements for off-road vehicle events; however, no consensus was reached. The staff will prepare workplans and associated budgets to share with the Committee in June.

1.1B RULEMAKING

- **Stormwater Management:** At the request of the New Jersey Society of Professional Engineers, staff conducted a webinar on the Commission's new stormwater management rules on April 1, 2022. Staff members are in the process of completing a draft model stormwater ordinance that will be reviewed with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and then distributed to Pinelands municipalities for adoption.
- **Right of Way (ROW) Pilot Program:** Staff is completing a draft rule proposal to review with the P&I Committee at its May 27, 2022 meeting.
- **Water Management (Kirkwood-Cohansey):** Staff is completing a draft of a full rule proposal, which will be reviewed with the P&I Committee at its May 27, 2022 meeting.
- **Amendment petition:** The Commission received a petition from Bill Wolfe to amend the CMP on March 9, 2022. The petition, which was also submitted to the New Jersey Highlands Council and NJDEP, requests that all three agencies enact development restrictions in certain wildfire hazard areas. By letter dated March 23, 2022, staff notified the petitioner that pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:50-7.3(b) and 7.5, additional information would need to be submitted to complete the petition. On March 24, 2022, Mr. Wolfe submitted two emails objecting to the staff's incomplete determination. Mr. Wolfe subsequently submitted a third email, dated April 12, 2022, again noting his objections while attempting to demonstrate that his initial submission was sufficient. A response to Mr. Wolfe's April 12, 2022 email is being prepared. In the

meantime, both NJDEP and the Highlands Council denied the petition for rulemaking. Notices to that effect will be published in the New Jersey Register in June.

1.1C OPEN PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

- A total of 10 Open Public Records Act (OPRA) requests were received in April. Six were provided responsive material, one was advised that there was no responsive material, and three were advised to schedule a file review.

1.1D PINELANDS MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

- The Pinelands Municipal Council did not meet in April.

1.1E OTHER

- The Commission's office reopened to visitors, applicants, and the public on April 4, 2022. The Commission will begin holding hybrid public meetings on May 13, 2022. Commissioners and members of the public will have the option of attending in person or participating via Zoom and YouTube.
- Shannon Higginbotham resigned from her position as the Burlington County appointee to the Commission on April 9, 2022. The County has not yet appointed a replacement.
- Atlantic County appointed Commissioner Irick for an additional three-year term on the Commission, which will now extend to June 27, 2025.

1.2 LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

1.2A Legislation: There are no legislative updates for April as the State Legislature is currently conducting budget hearings.

1.3 HUMAN RESOURCES

- **Return to Office:** In accordance with the Pinelands Commission Return to the Office plan, all staff began reporting to work at the office on a full-time basis starting January 31, 2022. Weekly COVID-19 testing of unvaccinated employees resumed April 1st. The office opened to the public, but all meetings continued to be conducted remotely.
- **Telework Pilot Program:** In coordination with the Civil Service Commission, the State established a pilot telework program for state employees on April 6, 2022. The pilot program will begin on July 1, 2022 and be in effect for one year. Employees will be given the option of working remotely two days each week in accordance with an extensive series of guidelines, including applications, training, surveys, and agreements. The Commission staff is currently drafting a plan to implement the pilot program. The plan will need to be submitted to the Governor's Authorities Unit by June 1, 2022 and must be approved before the program can begin.

- **Training:** Commission supervisors participated in a webinar as part of the NJ Employee Advisory Services Supervisor/Management training series. The webinar, “How to Give Difficult Feedback to your Employee,” was held on Wednesday, April 20th in the TDM room.
- **Recruitment:** The Commission is currently recruiting for four soon-to-be vacant positions. Job announcements were posted on numerous websites and distributed via email. Resumes for two positions (Human Resources Manager and Research Scientist) are due by May 4, 2022. The deadline to submit resumes for the two MIS positions has been extended to May 13, 2022.

2 INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

- **NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU):** On December 29, 2021, the Commission received notification that its application to BPU for a Local Government Energy Audit had been approved. The Local Government Energy Audit program is open to local and state governments and non-profit organizations. The program provides reports on how facilities use energy, identifies energy conservation measures and guides applicants toward appropriate and available rebate and incentive programs to fund implementation of recommended energy efficiency strategies. Staff hosted the BPU consultants for a site visit on January 19, 2022. The consultants provided draft Energy Audit Reports on February 18, 2022 and met with Commission staff to review the findings and recommendations on March 18, 2022. Final reports were provided to the Commission on March 21, 2022 and have been posted on the Commission’s website.

- **Rutgers Cooperative Extension:** Throughout April, Commission staff worked with the Rutgers Cooperative Extension to finalize the design and plant selections for the rain garden that will be installed in front of the Richard J. Sullivan Center for Environmental Policy & Education. Commission staff finalized the list of species that are native to the Pinelands, are suitable for use in a rain garden and are commercially available. Staff has contacted six plant nurseries to source plants that will be purchased for the project, and it has already purchased some of the plants. Rutgers has provided the Commission with a rendering of the garden, as shown in the photo above. Commission staff has



Above: The Rutgers Cooperative Extension sent the Commission an updated rendering to show the location and the native Pinelands plant species that will be incorporated into the 340-square-foot rain garden at the Commission’s headquarters.

designed a wayside panel that highlights the purpose and benefits of rain gardens. The panel will be installed next to the garden. Meanwhile, staff continues to explore the options for hiring a contractor to undertake the necessary installation work. The Commission entered into an agreement to work with Rutgers on the project in December 2021, and construction of the rain garden may occur in late spring.

- Interagency Council on Climate Change (IAC):** The IAC met on April 12, 2022. The NJ Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) highlighted the recent release of two IPCC reports: one on Ecosystem Biodiversity and the second on the Global Mitigation Process to Limit Global Warming in New Jersey. The CRO noted his goal is for each IAC member agency to develop an agency-specific Resilience Action Plan (RAP) by October 2023. The RAP will outline how each agency will incorporate climate resilience into their policies, programs and decision-making processes. Advisory Groups comprised of IAC member agencies will assist in the development of the individual RAPs by providing templates and glossaries to achieve consistent documents across all agencies.
- Forest Stewardship Task Force** - The NJ Forest Stewardship Task Force established by Senator Bob Smith in February 2022 held its kickoff meeting via Zoom on April 28, 2022. Branwen Ellis and Charles Horner represented the Commission at this initial Task Force meeting. Approximately 200 participants attended the meeting, and approximately 100 participants signed up to provide public comment at the meeting. The Task Force will be evaluating and recommending policy positions on approximately ten different forestry issues.
- NJDEP:** Commission staff and Commissioners Matos, Lohbauer and Lettman met with NJDEP Assistant Commissioner John Cecil and other NJDEP staff on April 27, 2022 to discuss the Department’s plans to address issues related to motorized vehicle access and resulting damage in Wharton State Forest.

3 PLANNING

3.1 CONFORMANCE ACTIVITY

	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
Master Plans/Ordinances Received		
Adopted	9	26
Drafted or Introduced	10	38
Total ¹	11	47

¹The total accounts for unique master plans and ordinances received (i.e., it does not double count drafted, introduced, or adopted submissions for the same ordinance).

Substantial Issue Finding ²	0	1
No Substantial Issue Finding	6	11
No Issue Finding	4	6
Total	10	18
Finding Letters Issued³	7	14

3.2 CULTURAL RESOURCE ACTIVITY

Activity	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
Applications Reviewed	8	38
Surveys Required	0	0
Surveys Reviewed	0	2
Certificates of Appropriateness Required	0	1

Notable Activity:

- New Jersey Historic Trust (NJHT):** Cultural Resource staff completed the final submission of a Historic Site Management Grant application to the New Jersey Historic Trust for the 2022 matching grant round. If awarded, the Commission will utilize the grant funds to hire a consultant to prepare a Preservation Plan. This planning document will enable the Commission to prioritize and implement future projects related to the rehabilitation and preservation of historic Fenwick Manor. Grant awards are not expected to be made until September 2022.

² Ordinances and Master Plans that are found to raise substantial issues with respect to the standards of the CMP require formal review and approval by the full Commission.

³ A single finding letter can pertain to multiple master plans/ordinances from the same municipality.

- Brotherton Reservation Excavations:** Cultural Resource staff conducted archaeological trench excavations at a portion of the 18th century Brotherton Lenape community site, originally located in present-day Indian Mills, Shamong Township. From April 25th-29th, multiple trenches were opened and shovel skimmed in an effort to identify any extant subsurface features potentially associated with the original Reservation. Results are pending, and additional work is anticipated for either late 2022 or 2023.



Above: A Commission archaeologist excavating the trench floor at the Brotherton site.

3.3 PINELANDS DEVELOPMENT CREDIT (PDC) PROGRAM

Activity	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
PDCs Allocated	0	5.36
PDCs Severed	1.00	3.00
Acres Protected	20	75
PDCs Extinguished	0	0
Acres Protected	0	0
PDCs Sold	5.50	7.50
Average Sales Price per PDC	\$98,000	\$92,267
Average Sales Price per right	\$24,500	\$23,067
PDCs Redeemed	0.25	4.25

Notable Activity:

- PDC Severances:** 1.00 PDCs (4 rights) were severed, permanently preserving a 20-acre parcel in Mullica Township’s Agricultural Production Area.

- **PDC Redemptions:** 0.25 PDCs were redeemed for the development of two single-family detached dwellings in a commercial zone in Hamilton Township’s Regional Growth Area.

3.4 SPECIAL PROJECTS

- **Pinelands Conservation Fund:** On April 22, 2022, an invitation was emailed to agencies and organizations that acquire and preserve land in the Pinelands Area. The invitation opens a new round of land acquisition using the same criteria first set by the P&I Committee in 2021. A total of \$1.5 million from the Pinelands Conservation Fund is being made available. Governmental and non-profit land preservation partners are invited to visit the Commission’s website for more information on the criteria. Project proposals will be accepted until July 15, 2022.
- **Pine Barrens Byway:** On March 16th, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and National Scenic Byways Program (NSBP) released their 2022 grants and technical assistance Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). The grant program makes \$22 million available for Byway projects across the country and is facilitated by state Departments of Transportation. The Commission staff distributed information on NOFO grant application contacts, requirements, and deadlines to all Pine Barrens Byway municipalities and other interested stakeholders.
- **Stockton University 2020 Facilities Master Plan:** Stockton University has adopted and submitted its 2020 Facilities Master Plan to the Commission for review and approval. On April 22, 2022, Commission staff participated in a virtual meeting with representatives of Stockton University to discuss the process for the Commission’s review of the Master Plan, preparation of an updated processing Memorandum of Agreement, advancement of various pending development applications and correction of a previously recorded Deed of Conservation Restriction to reflect existing infrastructure (e.g., roads) on campus and allow for necessary improvements.

4 REGULATORY PROGRAMS

4.1 APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Activity	Monthly Total	Calendar Year to Date
Pre-Application Conferences	13	49
Certificates of Filing	12	69
Public Development Reports	1	9
Forestry Certificates of Filing	0	1
PDC Letters of Interpretation	1	7
Non-PDC Letters of Interpretation	0	0
MOA Consistency Determinations	5	17
Review of Agency Determinations	56	269

4.2 NOTABLE APPLICATIONS

- **Tabernacle Township, Existing Municipal Building Site (App. No. 1981-1383.007):** The Township requested emergency authorization from the Commission to allow for the placement of three office trailers on the site of its existing municipal building. The Township has determined that the existing municipal building is structurally unsafe and must be vacated by May 31, 2022. After conferring with the Chair of the Commission, on April 5, 2022, a letter was sent to the Township authorizing the placement of the three office trailers on the parcel. The letter indicated that if the trailers were to remain on the parcel after September 30, 2022, an after-the -fact application for the trailers must be completed with Pinelands Commission.
- **Residential Development, Jackson Township (App. No. 1983-5386.002):** This application proposes 457 dwelling units and a 24,500 square foot private school. The Pinelands Commission issued a Certificate of Filing for the proposed development on April 5, 2019. In December of 2019, the Township Planning Board denied the proposed development application. On April 1, 2022, the Commission received a copy of a Consent Order issued by the United States District Court, District of New Jersey, indicating that that the applicant, Jackson Township, and the Jackson Township Planning Board had entered into a Settlement Agreement. The Settlement Agreement appears to provide that the Township and the Township Planning Board have approved the previously denied development without further action by the Township Planning Board. Pinelands Commission review of the development “approval” remains necessary. That review is currently underway.
- **Marina, Washington Township (App. No. 2022-0004.001):** On April 6, 2022, the Commission staff received a request for a pre-application conference for the proposed expansion of an existing marina located on the Mullica River. The proposed expansion consists of approximately 60 boat slips and 15 jet ski slips. The proposed marina expansion includes the dredging of approximately two acres of the Mullica River to a depth of approximately four feet below the existing riverbed. The Commission is receiving public comment on the proposed marina expansion. A pre-application conference is scheduled for May 5, 2022.
- **Vegetation Clearing, Hamilton Township (App. No. 1990-0191.001):** On April 6, 2022, the Commission staff attended a Zoom court hearing in support of Township officials regarding clearing that had occurred on a 7.75-acre lot in Hamilton Township. An unspecified portion of the clearing occurred in the required buffer to wetlands. At that hearing, the defendant did not appear. The Court issued a warrant for the property owner.
- **Jackson Road Bridge Replacement, Burlington County (App. No. 2022-0059.001):** On April 21, 2022, the County requested emergency authorization from the Commission to allow for the replacement of an existing bridge. The County indicated that emergency authorization was necessary to provide direct emergency vehicle access to areas of the Township and ensure public safety. After conferring with the Chair of the Commission, on April 25, 2022, a letter was sent to the County authorizing the replacement of the existing bridge. The letter indicated that an after-the fact application must be completed with the Pinelands Commission for the proposed bridge replacement.

4.3 OFF-ROAD VEHICLE EVENT ROUTE MAP APPROVALS

- **Application # 20050459.035**
Competition Dirt Riders, Inc.
Approval Issued: 4/28/2022
Event Name: Ormond Farms Hare Scramble
Event Date: April 30 and May 1, 2022
Municipality: Maurice River Township
Lands Utilized: Ormond Farms located on Hesstown Road
Route Length: 10 miles

5 SCIENCE

5.1 ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

- **Water Level Monitoring:** In April, Commission and Communications staff measured water levels at forest plots and ponds in the Commission network of long-term monitoring sites. Staff also downloaded water level data collected from continuous water level recorders installed in seven ponds. This work is completed each month with assistance from the Communications Office.
- **Pinelands-wide Water Quality Monitoring:** Staff completed sampling pH and specific conductance at the 37 ponds in April. This sampling occurs twice each spring to monitor long-term changes in these two parameters. Staff also completed the April round of pH and specific conductance sampling at the 47 stream sites. This work is completed four times each year to monitor temporal trends in these two variables. The proficiency testing that was conducted in March to maintain the certified laboratory status was found to be within the acceptable limits of error.
- **Annual Frog and Toad Surveys:** Staff completed the April round of nighttime frog and toad vocalization surveys.

5.2 LONG TERM STUDIES

- **Kingsnake Study, Joint Corn Snake Study, Rare Snake Monitoring, and Box Turtle Study:** For the **Kingsnake Study**, staff completed entering radio tracking data and other related snake data and is proceeding with final data proofing. Most kingsnakes emerged from dens in April. Some of these snakes were collected to remove the transmitters and retire the snakes from the study or replace the transmitters to continue radio tracking in 2022. For the fourth year of the **Joint Corn Snake Study**, Commission and Herpetological Associates (HA) staff reopened and began to monitor the drift fence for animals found under the wood and metal cover, in box traps, and in pitfall traps established along the fence array. In 2021, a total of 2,111 reptiles, amphibians, and small mammals have been captured or detected at the fence array. In April, staff continued to capture and process corn snakes, pine snakes, and black racers emerging from dens that have been corralled as part of the **Rare Snake Monitoring** project. Processing the snakes includes

collecting data on weight, length, and snake fungal disease sores, and inserting a PIT tag if the individual has not been previously captured. After processing, the snakes were released outside of their den corrals because of the moderate spring temperatures. Staff continues to finalize data to submit to the NJDEP Endangered and Nongame Species Program to satisfy the annual scientific collecting permit requirements. For the past several years, the Commission has been listed on the HA snake permit to accomplish the snake research. NJDEP staff asked Commission staff to obtain a separate permit for Commission snake research, so staff submitted proposals to NJDEP for each snake study to obtain a scientific collecting permit for 2022. NJDEP staff provided comments on these snake study proposals for Commission staff to address. Staff began receiving training from Dr. Howard Reinert of The College of New Jersey on conducting snake surgeries for implanting and removing transmitters. For the **Box Turtle Study**, staff frequently monitored radio tracked box turtles in April to detect when they emerged from hibernation burrows. This information is especially important as it pertains to the potential impact of conducting prescribed fires in the vicinity of box turtles that are on the ground surface.

5.3 OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

- Staff began receiving training from Dr. Howard Reinert of The College of New Jersey on conducting snake surgeries for implanting and removing transmitters.

6 COMMUNICATIONS

6.1 COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLICATIONS

- **Website:** The Pinelands Commission’s website was viewed 14,707 times in April 2022. Staff completed significant updates to the Applications and Pinelands Conservation Fund webpages in April.
- **Inquiries/Correspondence:** The Communications Office received and responded to 52 inquiries from the public in April, including phone calls, e-mails, and media inquiries. Staff arranged for 6ABC Action News to cover the Commission’s archaeological dig at the site of the former Brotherton Reservation in Shamong Township.
- **NJDEP GIS Mapping Contest:** The Commission’s [Pine Barrens Byway Story Map](#) won second place in a statewide mapping contest held by the NJDEP on April 7th.

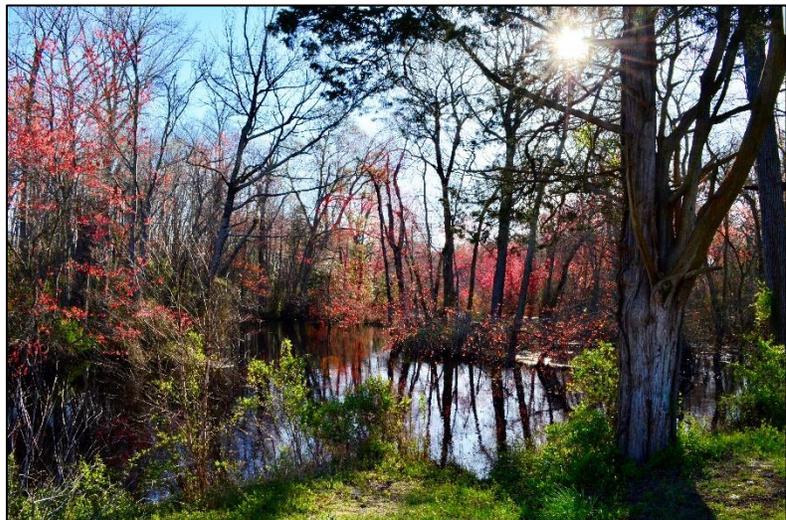


Above: The Commission won Second Place in a statewide mapping contest in April.

6.2 EVENTS, OUTREACH & INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS

- **Pinelands Speaker Series Webinars:** Staff hosted a webinar presentation entitled “Communication in Nature Part 2: Amphibians, Insects, and Mammals” on April 14th. Staff has arranged for local musician Pat Seiler to perform songs from his new album, which features recordings of birds, frogs, and other sounds of nature in the Pinelands. Mr. Seiler is scheduled to perform in the conference room in the Richard J. Sullivan Center at 4 p.m. on Friday, May 20th. The event will be open to the public, and it will be livestreamed on the Commission’s YouTube Channel.
- **Education Programs and Events:** In April, staff delivered Pinelands education programs to 100 students at Southern Regional Middle School and presented an educational program for approximately 30 members of the public in Manchester Township. Staff also led approximately 40 students from Central Regional High School on an educational tour of Double Trouble State Park. Staff also represented the Commission at the Ocean County Soil Conservation District’s Barnegat Bay Educators Round Table at Jakes Branch County Park. Lastly, staff represented the Commission at Stafford Township’s Green Fair.

- **Social Media Enhancements:** In April, staff shared 55 photos on the Commission’s Facebook page, 53 photos on Instagram, and 24 tweets on Twitter. The Commission’s photos were featured on three different Instagram sites in April, reaching more than 55,000 people. Staff also used the Commission’s drone to film footage that was used in a newly created video highlighting the archaeological dig in Shamong. The drone footage was also used in a story that aired on 6ABC Action News.



Above: Staff shared 55 photos on the Commission’s Facebook page in April, including this early morning scene on the south branch of the Rancocas Creek in Southampton Township.

- **Science Office Assistance:** A member of the Communications Office assisted the Science Office by measuring water levels on April 20th and 22nd.
- **Pinelands Summer Short Course:** Staff continued to plan the annual Pinelands Summer Short Course, which is scheduled for July 21, 2022 in Hammonton.

7 INFORMATION SYSTEMS

- **Pinelands Commission Information System Upgrades:** The Pinelands Commission Information System (PCIS) is the internal system of record for all applications to the Pinelands and associated transactions. Staff provided desktop support, implemented enhancements and bug fixes to streamline operations and facilitate remote work. Staff worked with Treasury on the FileNet P8 upgrade to move towards the removal of the legacy FileNet software; a system that stores digital copies of the Pinelands Commission's application data.
- **Cybersecurity:** Vigilance to protect the internal networks, hardware, and data of the Pinelands Commission is critical in today's networked world. The Information Systems office participated in the monthly call hosted by the New Jersey Cybersecurity & Communications Integration Cell (NJCCIC). To improve security, staff implemented changes on the Active Directory server to enable self-service password reset and tested new password policies in the Information Systems office. Changes will be rolled out to the entire organization next month.
- **Permanent Land Protection (PLP) Data System:** The PLP system manages the data related to all the preserved land in the Pinelands National Reserve. Staff is preparing the PLP system and mapping interface for a release to all Pinelands staff in June.
- **Ad Hoc Reporting:** Staff assist the Pinelands Commission by generating reports to provide insight into relevant topics of interest. A draft report was created to visualize average response time statistics.
- **Pinelands Development Credit Bank:** The Pinelands Development Credit (PDC) Bank utilizes custom software to manage all operations including tracking data and issuing certificates. Staff developed reports for new Planning Office staff and provided training on the underlying data structures of the system.
- **Technology Enhancements:** Staff members continually evaluate emerging technologies for how they can impact or enhance the office environment. A license for BlueBeam Revu software was purchased for Regulatory Programs to create a paperless plan review workstation. Quotes for a WiFi Access Point were obtained so that the Commission can extend WiFi to staff in Fenwick Manor. Staff tested Windows 11 laptops for compatibility with internal software and systems.

8 BUSINESS OFFICE

8.1 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- **Application Fees:** April 2022, Net Total: \$113,841.26; Fiscal Year to Date Total: \$909,772.39 (182% of the budgeted projection for FY2022).

8.2 FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

- Four Automated External Defibrillators (AED) units were installed throughout the Commission. Eleven staff members attended AED and CPR training required to operate the units.

- Drone training was conducted on the Commission's property. The drone will be a valuable tool for Communications, Science and other Outreach Event functions.
- New meeting technologies are being tested for hybrid meeting environments. The Commission has introduced and is testing Meeting Owls that will combine in-person and virtual meeting platforms.