



PINELANDS  
PRESERVATION  
ALLIANCE



2020 STATE OF THE  
pinelands

AN ANNUAL REPORT BY THE PINELANDS PRESERVATION ALLIANCE  
[PINELANDSALLIANCE.ORG](http://PINELANDSALLIANCE.ORG)

# The New Jersey Pinelands

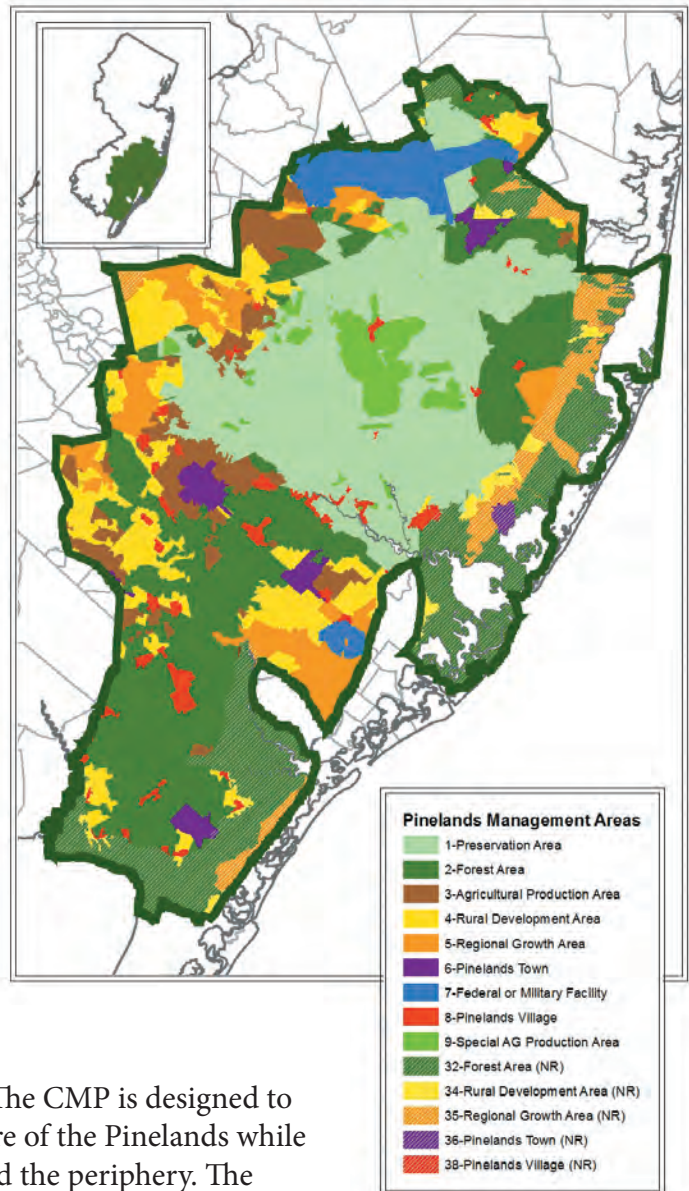
The Pine Barrens is a vast forested area extending across South Jersey's coastal plain. This important region protects the world's largest example of pitch pine barrens on Earth and the globally rare pygmy pine forests. One of the largest fresh water aquifers, the Kirkwood-Cohansey, lies underneath its forests and wetlands. The Pine Barrens is home to many rare species, some of which can now only be found here having been extirpated elsewhere.

During the 1960's construction of the world's largest supersonic jetport and an accompanying city of 250,000 people was proposed for the Pine Barrens. This proposal galvanized citizens, scientists and activists to find a way to permanently protect the Pinelands. In 1978 Congress passed the *National Parks and Recreation Act* which established the Pinelands National Reserve, our country's first. In 1979 New Jersey adopted the *Pinelands Protection Act*. This Act implemented the federal statute, created the Pinelands Commission, and directed the Commission to adopt a Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) to manage development throughout the region.

Many residents do not know that all new development in the Pinelands is controlled by the nation's most innovative regional land use plan. The CMP is designed to preserve the pristine conditions found within the core of the Pinelands while accommodating human use and some growth around the periphery. The Pinelands Commission's staff of approximately 40 professionals is directed by 15 Commissioners who serve voluntarily. Seven Commissioners are appointed by the Governor with approval of the state Senate, seven by the counties in the Pinelands, and one by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) also plays a key role in protecting the Pinelands. In addition to its job of implementing the CMP in the coastal zone, the DEP regulates the distribution of fresh water from the aquifers that lie beneath the Pinelands.

The Pineland Commission and DEP's accomplishments in the Pinelands are remarkable. But this region faces an onslaught of threats in the form of unnecessary pipelines, political interference to benefit development projects, and the failure of state agencies to enforce Pinelands rules on a consistent basis. Through public education and advocacy the Pinelands Preservation Alliance works to protect this great wilderness and give the public a voice in its preservation.



# State of the Pinelands 2020

The Pinelands Preservation Alliance presents this annual report in order to sum up the health of the Pinelands preservation efforts by our federal, state and local government agencies. We seek to provide the public and the agencies themselves with a report card that we can all use to move forward and do better in protecting this unique natural treasure.

This annual review of select actions or inactions of the last 12 months is the most comprehensive account of public policy actions that affect the Pinelands National Reserve.

We applied six criteria in assessing each action –namely, whether each action:

1. upholds the integrity of the Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP);
2. protects native habitats, for plants and wildlife;
3. safeguards the quality of Pinelands aquifers and surface waters;
4. insures the integrity of the water supply for people and the ecosystem;
5. enhances the cultural and historic resources of the area; and
6. advances education about the Pinelands.

Where a government agency followed its rules and took appropriate action we gave the agency a *thumbs up*. In cases where the agency drifted from its regulatory mandate and took an action that, in our opinion, was detrimental we gave the agency a *thumbs down*.



*The Pinelands Preservation Alliance depends on private donations from concerned citizens just like you. You make it possible for us to advocate for the Pinelands each and every day. Thank you for making our work possible!*

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Dear Friends of the Pinelands,

The year 2019 brought a major victory for the Pinelands, in the defeat of the South Jersey Gas pipeline, and important progress on key statewide environmental issues.

But it was another lost year for the Pinelands Commission, which has not advanced any of the policy reforms the Commission itself identified several years ago to ensure the long-term protection of Pinelands resources. Just as bad, the Commission's handling of pipeline applications over the past six years revealed major holes in its procedures, which it has refused to fix. At the same time, the Commission is trying to eliminate fundamental public appeal rights built into every part of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) since it was first adopted in 1980. And the Commission did everything it could to advance the New Jersey Natural Gas pipeline (the so-called Southern Reliability Link) despite the plain language and intent of the CMP and the risks this totally unneeded project brings to the people living, learning and working along its path.

As of this writing, the New Jersey Senate has not taken action to confirm the governor's nomination of five vital Pinelands Commission members. It is unclear whether the Senate will act, or will leave the Commission depleted and dispirited.

In recent months, the Pinelands Commission has not even been able to muster enough members at its meetings to vote on matters large and small. The Commission, in sum, is paralyzed by a combination of empty seats and years of mismanagement in the cause of promoting expensive, unneeded gas pipelines that only benefit the utilities and their owners.

What an irony that 2019 was also the Pinelands Protection Act's 40th anniversary!

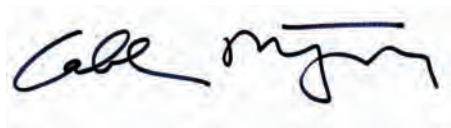
And while the Pinelands Commission watches from the sidelines, Pinelands waters are being contaminated and depleted, public conservation lands are being desecrated by illegal off-roading and dumping, and the Commission lacks any policies or plans to alleviate the impacts of climate change on this region.

Fortunately, we are seeing real progress in statewide policies that have a big impact on the Pinelands.

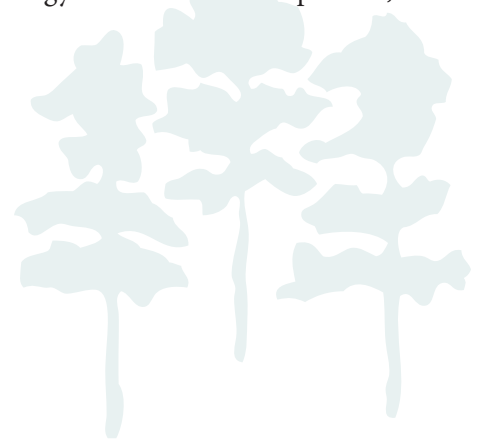
The governor, the Attorney General, and the Department of Environmental Protection are taking strong steps to halt and remediate the poisoning of aquifers and surface waters by PFOAs and related toxic chemicals whose ubiquity and dangers have only recently come into focus. The governor and legislature are preparing to invest serious money to eliminate lead in drinking water. The Attorney General helped bring the South Jersey Gas case to a successful conclusion and is vigorously fighting the PennEast pipeline. We are seeing the first signs that the Department is getting serious about defending public lands from unlawful off-roading.

Perhaps the biggest statewide policy shift, though, is in energy, where the governor has committed our state to having 100% clean energy by 2050. Many of us argued unsuccessfully for a real moratorium on new gas pipelines and similar old-school projects during our transition to clean energy. But with a new and ambitious State Energy Master Plan, the selection of an experienced company to develop large-scale offshore wind energy, and new solar energy and electrification policies, New Jersey really is moving towards a "clean energy economy."

Best wishes,



Carleton Montgomery  
*Executive Director*



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# Victory for the Pinelands!

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In February, the South Jersey Gas pipeline project fell apart - leading to one of the biggest victories in recent years in the fight to protect the Pinelands National Reserve.

This project threatened the very foundation of Pinelands protection. It showed how vulnerable the Pinelands really are to political meddling despite its 40 years as a national model of sound land use planning at both the federal and state level. It also shows how seriously weakened and divided the Pinelands Commission has become.

South Jersey Gas (SJG), the gas utility for southern New Jersey, filed an application to construct a 22-mile, high pressure natural gas pipeline through the Forest Management Area of the Pinelands National Reserve in 2013. SJG presented the pipeline as providing back-up service to its existing customers in Cape May County and new service to a proposed gas-fired power plant at the B.L. England site on Beesley's Point in Upper Township.

The proposed pipeline violated the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP). The CMP only permits infrastructure like gas pipelines in the Forest Management Area if it is "intended to primarily serve the needs of the Pinelands" - that is, only if needed for the towns and villages within the Pinelands. (N.J.A.C. 7:50-5.23). This project did not meet that criteria.

Despite that fact, the staff of the Pinelands Commission was determined to find a way to approve this project. It was clear from the beginning that the most powerful forces in our state were pushing for the pipeline to be built.

Over the next six years, we won a denial by the Commission itself and a decision by the Court of Appeals overturning the attempt by the Commission's executive director to approve the pipeline without any vote by the Commissioners. In the meantime, however, then-governor Chris Christie and Cumberland County Freeholders packed the Commission with people they could count on to approve the pipeline.

In 2017, the pipeline was approved by the Pinelands Commission despite massive public protest (over 1,000 people attended the meeting). And despite the fact that four former governors - Byrne, Kean, Florio and Whitman, as well as the original leaders of the Commission staff, joined the fight against the pipeline.

We appealed this decision, along with Sierra Club and Environment New Jersey. Governors Byrne, Florio and Whitman filed a friend of the court brief opposing the Pinelands Commission actions. In January 2019, the court notified the parties it would have oral argument on the case in March. But PPA had now gathered information showing the owners of B.L. England had actually done nothing to start the process of building the power plant. That made sense because improvements to the electric grid and changing industry economics meant it was no longer going to be so profitable to build a new plant there.

We took this information to the Attorney General, and within hours the whole shaky edifice on which the Commission had built its approval came crashing down. The B.L. England owner filed papers with the court conceding it did not intend to build the power plant. The Attorney General followed up with papers saying there is now no basis for approving the SJG pipeline.

This sorry chapter in the Pinelands Commission's history is now closed. But these events show just how vulnerable the Pinelands is to political and legal manipulation, no matter what the rules say. Only if citizens demand that the right people be put in charge of implementing Pinelands protections can we ensure those protections are respected and enforced.

## The Governor

**Expectations:** *The governor should propose and support statewide and regional initiatives that have a positive impact on the Pinelands and its environs. It is imperative that the governor appoint people to the Pinelands Commission who believe in the bedrock environmental mission of the Pinelands. The governor should not use his/her authority and power to bypass Pinelands protections or make exceptions for special interests.*

### Pinelands Commission

#### Appointments

Governor Murphy nominated five highly qualified individuals to serve on the Pinelands Commission: Theresa Lettman, Jessica Rittler Sanchez, Jennifer Coffey, Edward Lloyd (for reappointment), and Robert Jackson (previously served from 2008-2015). The Governor's appointments have yet to serve since all five nominations are still pending an affirmative vote by the full Senate. It is disappointing that the process has stalled. Even more disappointing is that important Pinelands Commission actions, such as water protection reforms, are stalled. We hope the Senate will confirm all nominees before the end of the year.

#### Pinelands Commission Chair

Governor Murphy appointed Rick Prickett as the new Chair of the Pinelands Commission in May. Rick, who has served as a Commissioner since 2012, is an outstanding choice. He has spent decades as a teacher, local elected official, advocate, and member of the Pinelands Commission helping others understand what a wonderful resource we have in the Pinelands, and how important it is that we all pitch in to protect this unique part of New Jersey's natural heritage. He is a naturalist with deep knowledge of Pinelands ecology. He is also an eminently thoughtful person when it comes to important policy and development issues coming before the Commission.

## Federal Government

**Expectations:** *In 1978 Congress created the Pinelands National Reserve, the country's first Reserve. As provided in the federal law, Governor Brendan T. Byrne established the Pinelands Commission, and a Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) was prepared and approved by U.S. Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus on January 16, 1981. The federal government's primary roles in the Pinelands protection effort are to provide a representative on the Commission, to finance public land acquisition and to monitor the implementation of the CMP. At a minimum, the federal government should enforce federal environmental laws, vote responsibly on actions before the Commission, support the CMP, and provide the necessary funding for land acquisition through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).*

### Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst Cleanup

After years of delays, the Joint Base will finally start to clean up groundwater contaminated with trichloroethylene (TCE) at a military site along Route 539 in Plumsted Township, Ocean County. TCE was first identified in groundwater in 1986. TCE is a concern since there is strong evidence that TCE can cause kidney and liver cancer. The chemical was widely used as a degreasing agent at the site. Today the groundwater plume is massive, approximately 64 acres in area, and has an estimated length of 2,759 feet and a width of approximately 1,200 feet. The plume is in the shallow Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer. This shallow aquifer provides over 90 percent of the water to local streams and wetlands. PPA has been advocating for over two decades to have the site cleaned up. The cleanup is estimated to cost \$7.3 million.

### Land & Water Conservation Fund

Congress finally passed a permanent reauthorization for the Land and Water Conservation Fund after years of government siphoning off the funds for other programs.

Approximately \$900 million comes from revenue collected from offshore drilling each year. It is one of America's most important conservation programs for preserving natural, cultural and historic treasures. The reauthorization was a huge win, but money in this 54-year old fund still needs to be appropriated by Congress, which hopefully will happen before the end of the year.

## Regulation rollbacks

In 2019, we saw major rollbacks of federal protections for the environment, diversity and public health. The 2017 roll back of the Clean Power Plan continued this year as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) changed the calculated health risks associated with air pollution which resulted in less health-related deaths being reported, allowing further roll backs of the plan. This summer the Trump administration amended the Endangered Species Act to change how threats to species are incorporated into the review process and by changing habitat protections for threatened species. These changes come as multiple published reports highlight global declines in biodiversity. These slashes not only weaken previous successes of these laws but also leave American citizens more vulnerable to environmental health risks and climate change.

### LOOKING TO VOLUNTEER IN THE PINE BARRENS?

Contact stewardship coordinator Jason Howell (Jason@PinelandsAlliance.org) to get involved.

Volunteers help to restore damaged areas, protect the forest from ORV abuse, clean up trash and assist with monitoring projects.



## Congressman Andy Kim's PFAS bill

Congressman Kim co-sponsored legislation (H.R. 4295) that would require the Department of Defense (DoD) to carry out testing of children living at military facilities to track levels of perfluoroalkyl or polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in their bodies. These two chemical compounds have been used at military bases throughout the United States, including Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. These chemicals are very slow to degrade in the environment and can lead to potential adverse health effects in humans and wildlife, such as increased risk of cancer. At the Joint Base the source of the chemicals is primarily from the use of firefighting foam for training exercises and to extinguish actual fires. One key feature of H.R. 4295 is that it would direct the Department of Defense to provide blood testing services for children that currently live or have lived on military bases in the last ten years.

## New Jersey Court System

***Expectations:** The judicial system is the branch of government responsible for interpretation and application of the law. This includes environmental laws and the Pinelands Protection Act as well. Laws are implemented through regulations. Environmental laws and regulations are routinely a source of controversy, the root causes typically being the interpretation of their necessity, fairness or cost. The long-term integrity of the Pinelands and its resources depends on the strict interpretation of its laws and regulations. The judiciary should uphold the spirit and the letter of the law.*

## Superior Court - Burlington County Denied County's motion to dismiss

After two Freeholders voted in favor of the New Jersey Natural Gas Southern Reliability Link pipeline, even though they were actually employed by the union that was doing the pipeline installation work on this very

project, PPA was forced to sue the County for a ruling that these Freeholders violated basic conflict of interest rules. Incredibly, the County contested the suit and moved to have it dismissed on the false grounds that the union had no interest in the pipeline construction. Superior Court Judge Bookbinder, since retired, ruled that PPA had in fact stated a valid claim against the County and the Freeholders for conflict of interest. Yet the County continues to fight in court, rather than just admit those two Freeholders broke the law.

## New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

**Expectations:** *The DEP is responsible for protecting the state's environmental resources. It does this by developing and enforcing regulations that protect water quality, threatened and endangered species, and air quality; by overseeing state parks and wildlife management areas; by ensuring that there is enough water for both people and environmental needs; and by setting standards for contaminated site cleanup. Since there is significant overlap with Pinelands regulations, it is imperative that the DEP develops programs and enforces rules that are protective of the Pinelands.*

## Rare Plant Species Recovery Plans

The Office of Natural Lands Management (ONLM) has identified ten rare plant species that will be the subject of upcoming species recovery plans to improve the status of these plant populations in the state. The targeted species are American chaffseed, Table Mountain pine, Broom crowberry, Sea-beach amaranth, Bog asphodel, Pickering's morning-glory, Hirst Brothers' panic grass, Pine Barren gentian, Appalachian Mountain boltonia, and Pumpkin ash. The ONLM has conducted its first stakeholder meeting that included representatives from academia, environmental non-profits and both state and federal government to discuss the goals of the recovery plans. Plans will be developed in the coming year and be tailored to the individual life history traits of each species and where they are located.

## Off Road Vehicle Enforcement

Irresponsible and illegal Off-Road Vehicles (ORV) use continues to do a tremendous amount of damage in the Pinelands and throughout New Jersey. While we are optimistic it will do so soon, DEP has not yet adopted clear and decisive measures to solve one of the most challenging issues affecting public lands. While we have seen improvements in specific areas, the DEP has yet to take any substantial action in Brendan T. Byrne State Forest, Colliers Mills Wildlife Management Area, Greenwood Wildlife Management Area, and many yet unaddressed areas of Wharton State Forest among other holdings. Park Police and Conservation Officers are stretched in terms of personnel and resources, and need support from DEP through the creation and promotion of enforceable maps that can be implemented by land managers throughout the Pinelands.

## Stormwater Reduction

DEP is stepping up its efforts to address stormwater pollution. Very soon, DEP will release its latest green infrastructure rule, which will replace the stormwater management regulations. This new rule doesn't quite go far enough to address the stormwater ills of the past or take into account climate change, but it is a step forward by recognizing and codifying better ways to manage stormwater through green infrastructure techniques. In addition, DEP is releasing a guidance document for local governments interested in setting up stormwater utilities. Governor Murphy signed the Flood Defense Act into law earlier this year. The Act gives local governments, counties, and existing utilities the authority to set up a stormwater utility which is an entity that can collect stormwater fees to address stormwater pollution from existing development. Stormwater utilities are essential to cleaning up our waterways, since nearly 95% of all waterways in New Jersey are considered impaired by the state agency. DEP is planning to further improve the stormwater regulations and help support stormwater utilities over the next few years.



## Public Commitment to Barnegat Bay

For many years, the environmental community has requested that the DEP establish a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for nutrient pollution in Barnegat Bay. A TMDL identifies the maximum amount of nitrogen and phosphorus the Bay can safely receive while still meeting water quality standards. It is a plan to restore the impaired waters of the Bay. Recently, the DEP has publicly committed to establish such a TMDL for nutrient pollution. The DEP has developed and is now testing a highly sophisticated computer model of the Bay to help establish the nutrient loading the Bay can safely support and deserves credit for this work.

## Pinelands Commission

**Expectations:** A Commission whose members, although of diverse viewpoints, have a shared commitment to the purposes of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP), the courage to debate tough issues at meetings, and a respect for public process. By statute, the Pinelands Commission has fifteen commissioners who make up the governing body of the agency: seven appointed by the Governor; one appointed by each of the seven Pinelands counties; and one person appointed by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. The gubernatorial appointees are subject to the review and consent of the New Jersey Senate. Members of the Commission serve staggered three-year terms. The commissioners have final say with regards to all activities regulated by the CMP and, through the Executive Director, guide a staff of approximately 40 people.

The Commission today consists of the following fifteen members: **U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Appointee:** Vacant. **Gubernatorial Appointees:** Candace Ashmun, Edward Lloyd, Mark Lohbauer, Richard Prickett (Chair), Gary Quinn, and D'Arcy Rohan Green. One seat is vacant. **County Appointees:** Jerome Irick (Atlantic), Jordan Howell (Camden), William Pikolycky (Cape May), Jane Jannarone (Cumberland), Daniel Christy (Gloucester), Alan Avery, Jr. (Vice-Chair, Ocean), and Sean Earlen (Burlington). The Executive Director is Nancy Wittenberg, who reports to the commissioners.

## Water Supply Protections

The Commission continues to delay proposing amendments to the Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) to protect the shallow Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer from unsustainable groundwater withdrawals. Since the inception of the CMP, it has been recognized that groundwater withdrawals can have potentially harmful impacts on the unique Pinelands ecosystem. The Commission completed a \$5.5 million study of the shallow aquifer in 2012 and determined that the ecosystem is extremely sensitive to groundwater pumping. Despite the findings of that study, and a presentation this year on what the Commission might do, no protective measures have been proposed.



Water straight from the aquifer in the Pine Barrens

## LUCIS committee

The Pinelands Commission has taken an important step in responding to the climate crisis by forming the Land Use, Climate Impacts and Sustainability committee. Seven Commissioners, including Chairman Prickett, held the first public meeting in July to discuss the adverse impacts of climate change on the Pinelands, as well as ways the Pinelands Commission may alleviate contributions to climate change. The Committee plans

to identify priority actions for the full Commission to consider, as well as invite climate experts to present to and advise the Committee. There have been no formal actions yet, but the recognition of the extent of the climate crisis and formation of a relevant Committee is a step in the right direction.

## Candace McKee Ashmun Education Center

One of the greatest environmental heroes for Pinelands protection, Candace McKee Ashmun, now has an education center named in her honor. The Pinelands Commission unveiled the new Candace McKee Ashmun Education Center at their offices in Pemberton with exhibits that highlight the natural and cultural treasures of the Pinelands. Candy Ashmun never lived in the Pinelands, but spent her entire professional career fighting for its protection. Ms. Ashmun is the last original Pinelands Commissioner still serving today. The Center is testimony to her work and the need for great champions like her. Visit the Pinelands Commission's webpage [www.nj.gov/pinelands](http://www.nj.gov/pinelands) for more information about the education center.

## Black Run Watershed

Years ago, the Pinelands Commission worked with Evesham Township, the Department of Environmental Protection, PPA and residents to devise Pinelands CMP revisions to protect the ecologically-intact Black Run watershed and Black Run Preserve in Evesham. The Commission identified these CMP changes for adoption in its last Plan Review process and its staff drafted the CMP revisions. The developer and township stated their support. Yet the Commission has done absolutely nothing to bring this positive move to fruition. The risk is that the market will change or the developer will lose patience and develop the headwaters of the Black Run watershed under current rules. This will result in the degradation of the entire watershed and one of the few truly pristine nature preserves found on the western edge of the Pinelands.

## Pinelands Educational Programs

The Pinelands Commission continues to add new educational programs and resources for the public. The Pinelands Short Course attracts hundreds of people each year and is a great opportunity to learn about nature, history and culture through workshops, lectures and field trips. (Save the date for the 31st annual Short Course on March 14, 2020.) The Commission also offers a summer short course in July and a series of lectures throughout the year. Sign up for email updates on their website to get notified about these events and others.

## State Legislature

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**Expectations:** *The principle function of the State Legislature is to enact laws for the benefit and protection of New Jersey. At a minimum, legislators should not sponsor bills that undermine the intent of the CMP, and at best will sponsor legislation that actually protects and enhances environmental richness and diversity in New Jersey and the Pinelands.*

## Pinelands Commission Appointments Stalled

In 2019, Governor Murphy nominated four highly qualified individuals to serve as Pinelands Commissioners, and re-nominated long time Commissioner Ed Lloyd whose term had expired. These nominees must be confirmed by the state Senate, which means an initial vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee. However, as of this writing, these five nominees, the first of which was announced in January, have yet to be included on the Committee's agenda, so they have not moved at all through the process towards their place on the Commission. This hold-up in the Senate is detrimental to the Pinelands Commission, which is operating with vacant seats and Commissioners appointed by the previous administration.

## Rare Plant Bill

This year, the Partnership for New Jersey Plant Protection, of which PPA is a member, was successful in having their Rare Plant Protection bill, A5201, introduced in the State Assembly by Assemblymen Conaway and Rooney. Over 35% of New Jersey's plant species are considered imperiled to some degree and yet there are no statewide protections for our native flora. This bill would create a threatened category for plants, offer protections for rare plant species and establish a plant conservation committee. We need a champion for rare species protection in the Senate in order to pass this bill and bring protection to native plants in New Jersey.

## Open Space Funding

In November 2014, New Jersey voters overwhelmingly passed a ballot measure to amend the state Constitution, dedicating a percentage of the Corporate Business Tax (CBT) revenue as a permanent source of funding for the open space, farmland, and historic preservation and stewardship programs. The passage of that measure required the percentage of CBT revenue to increase in 2018 and the New Jersey legislature to pass a package of bills allocating those funds. This year, the Legislature passed this new package, which allocates approximately \$315 million to preservation and stewardship programs.

## County Government

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**Expectations:** *In New Jersey, county governments provide essential services such as road and bridge maintenance, wastewater planning, recycling, parks and recreation, social services, and other functions. We expect county governments to implement programs and plan for the future in a manner consistent with the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP).*

## Burlington County Road Permit for SRL

After publically opposing the Southern Reliability Link (SRL) pipeline, Burlington County issued a road occupancy permit to New Jersey Natural Gas (NJNG) to build the 30" diameter high-pressure gas pipeline on county roads. The pipeline has been demonstrated unnecessary for reliable service, puts the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer at risk, violates the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan, and will cost ratepayers \$220 million. Despite these and other arguments outlined in the numerous lawsuits against New Jersey Natural Gas, the Freeholders allowed the permit to be issued without a formal vote, and before the courts can hear and decide the cases. Even though some of the Freeholders ran on their opposition to SRL, the permit application was approved in July.



*SRL Construction in Manchester April 2019*

## Local Government

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**Expectations:** *There are 56 municipalities entirely or partly within the Pinelands National Reserve. The Pinelands Protection Act envisioned that local governments would be primarily responsible for implementing the CMP. While some things are mandatory such as density requirements, municipalities have flexibility with implementation of resource management goals of the CMP as they revise their land use regulations. PPA therefore expects municipalities to propose ordinances and master plans consistent with the conservation goals of the CMP.*

## Hammonton & Evesham Infrastructure

Green infrastructure uses natural systems like native plants to capture stormwater runoff from the surrounding area and allow it to infiltrate into the ground rather than run off downstream. This restores the natural water cycle and helps to recharge the aquifer. Hammonton Public Schools completed three projects: two rain gardens at the high school, and a retention basin retrofit into a native meadow at the Early Childhood Education Center. School staff and students, the South Jersey Resource Conservation and Development Council's Team Habitat, and volunteers from Hammonton's Green Committee were critical to the success of these projects. In Evesham Township, rain gardens were installed at Richard Rice Elementary School, Marlton Lakes Clubhouse and Boat House, and at the Evesham Municipal Utilities Authority. Help from Evesham's Green Committee, students, and support from Mayor Veasy made it a success.



*Hammonton High School rain garden installation.*

## PILOT resolution

PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) began in 1970 to help municipalities offset their loss in tax revenue from open space acquisitions. Many municipalities in the Pinelands have large tracts of open space, and PILOT has helped for several decades to meet the town's revenue needs. Over time, budget allocations for the PILOT program have greatly decreased and payments were "frozen" at 2010 rates, resulting in inequities. For example, some municipalities received no payments for more recent acquisitions while others receive more than originally projected (as rates prior to the freeze were intended to decline over time). Municipalities are working hard to get the state's attention to fix this issue, and two municipalities in particular took a leadership role in pulling together a letter to Governor Murphy – Estell Manor and Woodbine. The mayors from these communities crafted a sign-on letter asking for restoration of funds to levels prior to the 2010 freeze. Thanks to Mayor Venezia and Mayor Pikolycky. Other municipalities that signed on to the letter included Lacey Township, Middle Township, Maurice River Township, Washington Township, Bass River Township, and Woodland Township.

## Municipal Coastal Resiliency Project

In 2019, PPA and Raritan Valley Community College continued a coastal management project funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. This project creates back beach protection strips that allow plants to naturally re-colonize, create critical habitat for rare beach plants and birds, and collect sediment that help to form dunes. Raking and driving continues to occur on the lower beach but are excluded from the protection strip where sediment collects at a rate of up to nearly one meter in a year. One target species, the federally listed Sea-beach amaranth, had a record-breaking year in 2019 with over 3,400 individuals in New Jersey, an increase of 112% over 2018. Forty eight percent of these individuals were found within the protection strips, which now cover more than 30 miles of beach in four state parks and four municipalities. Municipal beaches make up the majority of New Jersey's coastline and the participation of Long Beach, Ventnor, Beach Haven and Brick have made this project a great success.

## Media

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**Expectations:** *New Jersey has some challenges when it comes to media coverage. Our location puts us right in the middle of the New York and Philadelphia media markets making coverage of local and statewide issues a challenge. PPA works closely with local reporters to keep them informed on the many complicated issues affecting the Pinelands. Press coverage of Pinelands issues is critical to maintaining an informed and active constituency that will advocate for Pinelands protection.*

### Burlington County Times’ PFAS coverage

PFAS, or the family of compounds including perfluoroalkyl and polyfluorinated substances, have been found in drinking water in the Pinelands, primarily on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, but also in private wells outside the base, at levels exceeding even the very forgiving federal Environmental Protection Agency recommendations. The chain of events leading to these discoveries started decades ago with health and safety concerns that weren’t made public. The extent of the problem, and the details of who knew, and when, have been covered meticulously by investigative reporters, especially at the *Burlington County Times*. From local contamination to federal actions, their PFAS series has shed light on this complicated issue in clear, comprehensive articles for their readers in Burlington County, especially regarding the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer and the threat to our drinking water. Kudos on the stellar reporting. Keep it up!



*Candace McKee Ashmun*

## Non Governmental Organizations

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### Rancocas Conservancy’s Bucks Cove Run Acquisition

The Rancocas Conservancy has officially acquired the Bucks Cove Run Preserve near Whitesbog Village for protection and conservation. This 202-acre preserve is located in the headwaters of the Rancocas Creek and is comprised of leatherleaf wetlands, pitch-pine lowlands, savannah habitat, long overgrown cranberry bogs, decades-old blueberry rows, an ancient paleo-dune, and intermittent ponds. This property is home to many species such as Pine Barrens treefrogs, carpenter frogs, box turtles, and other Pinelands wildlife. When the Rancocas Conservancy, along with PPA and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, found this property in 2015 it was in a pitiful state. Off-road vehicles were running rampant throughout the wetlands and dune area, and illegal dumping had accumulated tons of debris. Since that time, volunteer cleanups and plantings have had a positive impact, and now under the new ownership of the Rancocas Conservancy, additional stewardship can move forward to restore this Preserve to pristine and biodiverse habitat.

## Individuals Who Made a Difference

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### Candace McKee Ashmun

Many people know Candy as the “Godmother of the Pinelands”. While Candy never lived in the Pine Barrens, she is one of its biggest fans and relentless advocates. This year Candy will have served on the Pinelands Commission for 40 years. Governor Brendan Byrne asked Candy to serve in 1979, at the Commission’s founding, and she has never stopped. Candy is also known for her environmental activism throughout

New Jersey. She served with the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions, the Upper Raritan Watershed Association, New Jersey Conservation Foundation, the State Planning Commission, and so many more. This year, Candy shared that she wanted to step down from the Commission and pass the torch on to Theresa Lettman, a similarly relentless advocate for the Pinelands and environmental protections throughout New Jersey. Candy's dedication and service must be recognized with a replacement that can fill her shoes. (Unfortunately, Candy's replacement has yet to be confirmed, even though Ms. Lettman was nominated nearly a year ago.) Thank you Candy for all of your years of hard work and for being a champion of the Pines.

## Rich Bizub

Rich Bizub's word has always carried special weight because he really knows his stuff, and he speaks with such measured authority that we don't see how anyone can disagree with him. Rich retired this year after 22 years advocating for the Pinelands as PPA's top water expert. Over his career in consulting and then with PPA, Rich developed an unmatched expertise in Pinelands water issues. His deep knowledge of the geology, regulations and history of the Kirkwood-Cohansey made a huge impact on our ability to protect water resources in the Pinelands. Rich has been a fantastic colleague and teacher. In addition to his policy work, he was always willing to help lead school programs and turn his practical skills to keeping systems at our office working. Thank goodness Rich and his wife Fay are staying in the area. We are certain to draw Rich out of retirement whenever we need his wisdom – which I expect will be often enough to keep him sharp!



*Rich Bizub*

## PINELANDS ACTION NETWORK

Pinelands Action Network (PAN) is an activist network run by PPA. The goal is to help you get involved and make a difference. We keep you up to date on important issues and help you advocate for Pinelands protections.

To join the Pinelands Action Network and get updates on important actions contact Rhyan at [RhyanG@PinelandsAlliance.org](mailto:RhyanG@PinelandsAlliance.org).

## Advocacy Volunteers

Pinelands issues vary widely, and while large development projects draw much of the media attention, there are a myriad of smaller concerns addressed at the municipal level, sometimes without much notice. Any victories won in the Pinelands are thanks to the tireless passion and hard work of activists. They come from all walks of life, of all ages, but all share a love of the Pines and a willingness to give their time. From emailing elected officials to giving testimony at public hearings to marching and wielding signs, these activists show up - in bad weather and at odd hours - to push decision-makers into doing the right thing. PPA is a true Alliance, and without the partnership of community groups, residents and supporters, we wouldn't have made it to 30 years. The fights may feel tiring and frustrating, but the wins are sweeter because they're shared among a community of active people who work hard to protect the Pinelands. Without their dedication, there might not be a Pinelands for us to enjoy today.

## A special thank you to this issue's contributing photographers!

Bob Boyd	Cover Image
Philip Dutch Bagley	Page 1
Sara Ascalon	Page 5
Agnes Marsala	Page 9
Shawn Glass	Back Cover



The **Pinelands Preservation Alliance** (PPA) works 365 days a year to protect the land, water, plants and wildlife of New Jersey's Pinelands. We have unparalleled expertise in Pinelands laws and regulations. This expertise allows us to engage thousands of people each year in actions to protect the wildest place in New Jersey. These accomplishments are funded by generous donors like you. Here is a small sample of our work in 2019. Learn more at [www.PinelandsAlliance.org](http://www.PinelandsAlliance.org).

Protecting the Pinelands for 30 Years

1989

**HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR WORK IN 2019**

2019

Advocacy



**SOUTH JERSEY GAS PIPELINE DEFEATED**

In February 2019, the South Jersey Gas pipeline project fell apart - leading to one of the biggest victories in recent years in the fight to protect the Pinelands National Reserve. This large natural gas pipeline was proposed for construction in the Pinelands National Reserve. In 2017, this project was approved despite violating Pinelands protection rules. After more than 6 years of opposition, this project was finally defeated. *Our legal challenges and your advocacy slowed the project down and led to its eventual defeat.* The fact that this project was approved shows how vulnerable the Pinelands is to political and legal manipulation, no matter what the rules say.

Science



**PROTECTING RARE PLANTS**

In 2019, PPA began working with the Department of Environmental Protection's Natural Heritage Program to improve habitat conditions for occurrences of the Pine Barren gentian. This fall flowering perennial is rare both in New Jersey and globally. It is one of ten species deemed as a high priority for recovery by the Natural Heritage Program. The Pine Barren gentian is fire-adapted and management activities include opening the canopy and introducing fire. Work has taken place in Brendan Byrne State Forest with the potential to expand into Wharton. These simple management changes have great potential for improving the number of plants and seed set at these sites.

Stewardship



**LAND PROTECTORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

In 2019, 265 PPA volunteers spent 1,162 hours removing 40,000 pounds of trash, planting 1,140 trees and shrubs and caring for natural areas in the Pinelands. Projects also included creating 600 state forest signs, building 18 kestrel boxes and blazing 14 miles of trail for the New Jersey State Trail project. Four critical habitat areas were protected from off-road vehicle abuse. This shows that a group of people with a common goal can change the entire perception of the Pinelands. We see this as a long-term effort to protect the Pinelands and prevent destructive actions that would otherwise go largely unchecked.

Outreach



**WILDERNESS FOR ALL**

In 2019, Pinelands Adventures provided more than 11,000 people with a wilderness experience in the Pinelands. Adventures was also able to subsidize programs so that 1,089 young people and adults from 38 schools and groups could experience the Pines. There is a growing body of scientific evidence that nature experiences benefit the physical and psychological health of children, improve school performance, and alleviate the stresses of growing up in distressed urban areas. Our goal is to create a permanent fund to support these programs, so that any school or service organization that wants to bring young people into the Pinelands can do so, regardless of their ability to pay for the program.



PINELANDS  
PRESERVATION  
ALLIANCE

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Southampton, NJ 08088

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The 2020 *State of the Pinelands Report* was released to our members and the public in January 2020 and covers actions that took place over the course of 2019.

Address Service Requested



## The Pinelands Preservation Alliance

The Pinelands Preservation Alliance is the public's leading voice for protecting the water, forests, plants and wildlife of the Pinelands. Founded in 1989, PPA has championed the effort to protect the Pinelands by:

- Fighting bad policies and developments
- Taking legal action when necessary
- Promoting smart growth to help existing communities thrive
- Getting people involved in the cause
- Taking people of all ages into the Pine Barrens to discover its wonders.

Our members are the most important source of support for the preservation of the New Jersey Pinelands.

Members receive a yearly subscription to our newsletter, discounts on Pinelands Adventures field trips, rentals and merchandise, and invitations to members' only events.

To join call us at 609-859-8860 or visit us on the web at [PinelandsAlliance.org](http://PinelandsAlliance.org).