Pinelands Preservation Alliance - How it all began

by Betty Wilson

Passage of the Pinelands Protection Act in 1979 was a great victory for preservation of the New Jersey Pinelands. The new state law along with the 1978 federal law set in motion what environmental activists had worked toward for decades. Reaching the goal was celebrated as the astonishing achievement it was.

At first it seemed as if the work of activists was done and people could move on to other things. The laws were passed. The Pinelands Commission was in place and funded. The Commissioners were appointed and their talented staff was hard at work to preserve the NJ Pinelands.

But... not so fast.

Trouble was brewing almost immediately. Attacks on the law and on the Commission and its regulations began right away and they were coming fast and furious. They continued throughout the first decade of the Pinelands Protection Act. Some powerful officials were heading up fierce opposition. Some towns pushed for more growth and fought the Commission's new rules. Public hearings on the Comprehensive Management Plan, the regulatory structure required under the federal law, were attended by large, angry crowds. Sometimes they felt dangerous.

While the environmental community and its allies rallied to counter the opponents, concerns arose among New Jersey environmental organizations that none was able to spend what was needed to monitor the Pinelands Commission and activities of its opponents. Through the 1980's, although New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF) had a full-time staff person, Michele Byers (now Executive Director of NJCF), assigned to the Pinelands, it became clear to Michele and
The Pinelands Preservation Alliance (PPA) turned 25 years old this year and this newsletter is dedicated to exploring our history as an organization and what the next 25 years might look like for PPA and for New Jersey’s Pinelands.

The Pinelands Preservation Alliance was officially incorporated as a nonprofit organization in July of 1989. In August 1989, thanks to funding from the Victoria Foundation, we were able to hire our first Executive Director, Sally Price. Sally was the only full-time staff at PPA for quite a while.

During those early years PPA had an office in historic Whitesbog Village located in what was then known as Lebanon State Forest. Lebanon State Forest was renamed Brendan T. Byrne State Forest in 2002 by Governor James McGreevey in recognition of Governor Byrne’s work to get the Pinelands Protection Act passed.

By the summer of 1993 we had outgrown our space in Whitesbog and moved our offices to an old bank building in the borough of Pemberton. At this point the staff had grown to five – although most were part time. In May 1998 PPA hired its second ever Executive Director, Carleton Montgomery who continues to serve and had guided PPA through complicated issues and significant organizational growth.

We spent about ten years in Pemberton and in 2004 we had grown enough to move to our current home, the Bishop Farmstead in Southampton. This property includes a farmhouse, carriage house and barn and has allowed us to host programs, events and a small visitor center. It is on the State and National Historic Register and we are proud to ensure the preservation of this site.

We have grown in staff, expertise and effectiveness. We now have nine full-time and two part-time staff. Over the last 25 years we have had great victories and disappointing defeats. But in the end the most important thing has always been you.

The Pinelands will only remain protected if the public demands it. And frankly it is not enough for us to just believe that the Pinelands deserve to be protected. We, as a group, must speak out – early and often.

Past experience with the projects like the South Jersey Gas pipeline have shown that the margins of victory are slim. Every day we strive to grow the constituency of people who demand the Pinelands remain protected. We promise to make sure that your voice is heard loud and clear for the next 25 years and beyond.

Thank you to our members, volunteers and partners!

Your contributions large and small send the message that the Pinelands are worthy of protection and we are humbled to be trusted with that mission.
PPA Looks Back Over 25 Years

by Jaclyn Rhoads, Assistant Executive Director

From 1979 to 1981, lawmakers, non-profit organizations, and concerned citizens were creating the policies and plans that would change southern New Jersey forever. They created the Pinelands National Reserve, an international gem recognized for its unique biota and ecosystem. Although the battle to protect the Pinelands from a mega-airport development appeared to be won, citizens remained concerned about the longevity of the plan.

This concern led to the creation of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance in 1989 in order to ensure that there was one organization whose sole responsibility was to watch over the Pinelands.

For 25 years, PPA has protected the boundaries, defended the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP), and created opportunities to further enhance the wildlife, biota, and built environment so that the ecosystem can thrive while still allowing development to occur in the designated regions. PPA’s work defending the CMP has allowed public and private land trusts to buy far more land for conservation than they could without the CMP in place – about 300,000 acres have been permanently protected since the rules came into effect in 1980.

Although our list of activities is way too numerous to provide here, we wanted to share our reflections on some of the most important accomplishments over our first 25 years.

DEFEATED A BILL TO REPEAL THE PINELANDS PROTECTION ACT

This effort by powerful South Jersey politicians to abolish the Pinelands Act and Plan unfolded between 1993 and 1995. PPA organized supporters to pack legislative hearings, producing sustained press coverage and defeating the proposed legislation. Since that time, no such frontal assault aimed at undoing the Pinelands in one fell swoop has been attempted.

REVIEW ALL WATER ALLOCATION REQUESTS:

One of PPA’s principal water resource protection strategies is to review all water allocation applications affecting southern New Jersey in order to prevent withdrawals of water from aquifers or streams that will harm stream flow or wetlands. These reviews have moved the state to deny or significantly reduce 14 major allocations over the past fifteen years including the shutting down of the Berlin Well that was draining nearby wetlands in violation of Pinelands and state protections - the first time the state had shut down a previously permitted well because of ecological impacts.

LED THE EFFORT TO PASS AN OFF-ROAD VEHICLE CONTROL LAW:

For twelve years, PPA led the effort to require the registration and tagging of Off-Road Vehicles (ORVs), so park rangers and police can keep ORVs off private property and public nature preserves. In 2009, the state legislature adopted legislation establishing mandatory registration and tagging of ORVs, increasing fines for illegal riders and establishing a fund that can be used to create dedicated ORV parks.

INCREASED RECOGNITION OF NATIVE PLANTS:

PPA developed our Gardening with Nature Guide in 2004 and held our first native plant sale in 2006. Since then we have sold over 11,700 native plants to more than 3,000 gardeners. PPA also worked with state and local road agencies, the Department of Environmental Protection and the Pinelands Commission to develop Pinelands-friendly standards for road maintenance to better protect native plants that thrive in the open canopy found along road shoulders. In 2012, the Pinelands Commission began the process of adopting these nature-and-money-saving measures through agreements with county and municipal governments.

BUILDING PUBLIC SUPPORT:

PPA has a broad array of public education and outreach achievements such as leading the effort to create the Pinelands License Plate in 1996, the proceeds of which have preserved over 5,500 acres of Pine Barrens habitats. PPA has taken thousands of people of all ages and abilities into the Pinelands so they can learn to love its forests, streams, bogs and historic sites. PPA created the annual State of the Pinelands report in 2007 so that the public can hold government agencies and municipalities responsible for their actions. PPA also created two films: The Pine Barrens Up Close and Natural and The Pine Barrens: A Region at Risk. These films capture the ecology and conservation challenges of the Pinelands.

STOPPED THE PIPELINE – for now!

In 2014 PPA and over 20,000 supporters defeated a 22-mile natural gas pipeline slated to pass through the Forest Area of the Pinelands in Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland counties. This private infrastructure project by South Jersey Gas would have required the state Pinelands Commission to approve a special deal and waive their rules to permit the project. Seven commissioners voted against the application and that was just enough. The Commission vote would not have gone the way it did if not for so many members of the public expressing their support for the Pinelands.

PPA has won many battles and continues to fight those that seem to never go away. We are thankful to have the support of so many members within and beyond the Pinelands that help us to keep the Pinelands water and soils acidic and the skies dark at night in the midst of the development knocking at the boundaries.

Stay up to date on important issues - sign up for the Pinelands Watch Newsletter

Contact Theresa
(609) 859-8860 x 22
theresa@pinelandsalliance.org
The Next 25 Years: It’s all About the People

by Carleton Montgomery, Executive Director

I have had the incredible privilege of working for the Pinelands and this region’s wonderful natural resources, as executive director of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance for the last sixteen years. So far, only a few ill-mannered people have let me know they think I’ve already overstayed my welcome. Having celebrated PPA’s 25th anniversary, we should focus on what PPA needs to accomplish over the next 25 years and what we should be doing now to make sure PPA can meet those goals as we pass the reins to new generations of Pinelands conservationists.

New generations! That is the essential point, isn’t it? We need to win the devotion of each new generation for this cause, or we will see just how quickly we can lose the Pinelands to development of the forests and pumping of the aquifers. Those generations coming up are defined not only by age, but also by the evolving ethnic demographics of our state, a changing baseline of expectations about how much nature is enough, and technology-driven habits that mean they usually have much less exposure to nature growing up than did their parents and, especially, their grandparents.

We know from experience that the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan is always under assault — and that it needs not only to be kept intact, but also actively improved in key areas like protection of the aquifers. The wildlife, plants and natural beauty of the Pinelands all hang by a thread, and that thread is active public support for preservation. If today’s Millennials (and whatever they end up calling their children’s generation) do not take up the cause, then the economic and political forces driving sprawl and pollution will eventually weaken and finally destroy the Pinelands protection laws.

The first challenge is to help young people get out into nature, have fun, and come away changed by the experience. PPA has long organized hikes and canoe trips, teacher training institutes and a limited number of field trips for teachers and schools that come to us for assistance. But we know that is not nearly enough.

A second challenge is to diversify the Pinelands protection effort. Nearly all those who ignited and led New Jersey’s environmental movement and Pinelands effort have been a lot like me — white suburbanites. The conservation movement has not consistently succeeded in winning the active support of today’s minority communities, but we know from the votes on statewide open space measures that support across ethnicities and the urban/suburban divide is essential to long-term success.

It is also true that, as New Jersey has lost more and more of its forests and farms, each new generation tends to take for granted all that has been lost before and only sees the smaller change taking place before his or her eyes. Trying to meet all these challenges, PPA is looking for new ways to bring people, young and old, into the Pine Barrens for experiences that make a deep and lasting impression, but also bring knowledge and a will to act when the Pinelands is threatened.

One piece of that effort is a creative new initiative to vastly expand our ability to help families, schools and community groups bring young people from all kinds of backgrounds into the Pine Barrens. By the time you read this, PPA will have acquired the former Adams Canoe Rentals on Atsion Road in Shamong. Many of you may have used the Adams livery service to paddle the Batsto and Mullica Rivers, since Wayne Adams ran this business for more than forty years.

Starting in May 2015, Pinelands Adventures, a new outdoor exploration operation set up and owned by PPA, will offer a wide range of paddling, walking and exploring activities. Our goal is to give people wonderful experiences, help them understand the Pinelands and how vulnerable this resource still is, and help them see how they can help save the Pinelands. Stay tuned!

Only by broadening and deepening the public constituency for protecting the Pinelands can we hope to succeed in addressing all the threats the region faces, from development pressure, to nonpoint source pollution, to abuse of public lands, to overtaxing the aquifers on which everything else depends. Achieving that goal must be the bedrock of PPA’s work over our next 25 years.

Lines on the Pines
Sunday, March 8th
Kerri Brooke Caterers
Hammonton, NJ

Open to the public for free from
11:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Enjoy a wonderful day meeting Pine Barrens authors, artists and artisans! Help celebrate the 10th anniversary of this incredible event.

For more information visit www.linesonthepines.org or call 609-561-1665
NJCF Executive Director at the time, David Moore, that much more was needed to counter the powerful organized forces seeking repeal of the Pinelands Protection Act and dissolution of the Comprehensive Management Plan and the Commission.

David and Michele researched around the country for comparable situations in an effort to learn what others had done. Michele attended the Land Trust Alliance Rally in the mid-1980’s and interviewed people from watchdog groups such as those in California and the Adirondack Mountains, the two whose circumstances came closest to those in the New Jersey Pinelands. She was able to learn how they formulated a mission, gained members, organized their advocacy and, critically, how they were funded. The next steps were to bring what she learned to bear on the Pinelands.

New Jersey Conservation Foundation under the leadership of David Moore had a record of supporting passage of the Pinelands Protection Act and the Comprehensive Management Plan and of supporting ongoing public information work about Pinelands preservation and the Pinelands Commission. Now, once again, they took the initiative and pulled together a group of interested people to consider how to move forward to assure ongoing advocacy and support for the Act and the Plan.

NJCF hired me as consultant to help the group decide on a mission and to work out a path forward. This group of volunteers met for many months in the living room of Rick and Nan Walnut’s home in the Pinelands and at the Whitesbog General Store. The group, which functioned as a steering committee, decided that a non-government organization whose sole mission was Pinelands protection was needed. It was originally conceived as an alliance of all major environmental organizations in the State. The newly created Pinelands Preservation Alliance filed its certificate of incorporation with the State of New Jersey on July 31, 1989. The organization received Internal Revenue Service approval as a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation shortly thereafter and has been working to protect the New Jersey Pinelands ever since.

Among the first Board of Trustees of the new non-profit organization were prominent people such as Buntzie Ellis-Churchill, President of the World Affairs Council in Philadelphia, former Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner David Bardin and Dr. Beryl Robichaud-Collins, author of Protecting the New Jersey Pinelands: A New Direction in Land Use Management (1988) as well as representatives of the major environmental organizations in New Jersey and citizen activists. The first Chair of the Board of Pinelands Preservation Alliance was Michael Huber, Chairman and CEO of J. M. Huber Corporation. A few years later former Governor Brendan Byrne became Honorary Chair of the Board, a position he still holds.

This new organization would take the lead advocating Pinelands preservation, monitoring the Commission's adherence to the Comprehensive Management Plan, supporting the Commission when appropriate and sounding the alarm when necessary. In the beginning some of the work required defending the Commission’s very existence and resisting pressures to dilute its power or eliminate it altogether. This new group would hold the Commission’s feet to the fire when necessary and be there as a counter-weight to opponents of preservation and those in power in the legislature and elsewhere seeking to turn back the preservation clock.

The new organization would push back and “give voice to public concerns for preservation” in the words of David Moore.

Credit must be given to Victoria Foundation which responded to David’s request for financial support to help the new organization, Pinelands Preservation Alliance, get started. Victoria had a record of supporting creativity and helping make positive change and once again they came through. Pinelands Preservation Alliance was on its way.

My thanks go to David Moore and Michele Byers for their help in recalling events and decisions from more than thirty years ago that were central to the founding of Pinelands Preservation Alliance.

Editors Note: Betty Wilson has devoted most of her career to serving the public, and much of that work has been dedicated to protecting the Pinelands and New Jersey’s environment. Her commitment to the Pinelands both in government service and in nonprofit advocacy, spans the program’s history. She served on PPA’s board in the mid-1990’s until she was appointed to the Pinelands Commission by Governor McGreevey in 2002. In 2005 Governor Codey appointed Betty Chair of the Commission, a position she held until she stepped down in 2008.
New Board Leadership at the Alliance
by Becky Free, Director of Membership & Communications

The Pinelands Preservation Alliance has been very lucky to have consistent leadership over its 25 years. We have only had two executive directors and two chairs of the board of trustees. PPA has been able to grow with steady guidance and a unified vision of what it means to protect the Pinelands. This is due in large part to the leadership of David Moore, our board chair since 2000. Dave has guided PPA by blending his first-hand knowledge of the history of the Pinelands protection effort with an understanding of the modern and complex challenges that the Pinelands now face.

Dave Moore, PPA's second chair of the Board of Trustees, stepped down this past October after serving with great distinction over 14 years. He will be succeeded by Jim Barnshaw, who has been a PPA member since 1995 and has served on the Board of Trustees since 2012. We are grateful that Dave will continue to serve as a member of the board.

It is impossible to overstate the impact Dave Moore has had on the protection of the Pinelands and open space throughout New Jersey. Dave became the executive director of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF) in 1969, which he led until his retirement in 1999. Over 77,000 acres were preserved as public open space by the Foundation during his tenure. Dave and NJCF were a major force behind the Pinelands Protection Act, the Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act, Coastal Area Facility Review Act, and Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act among many others.

Dave was also the moving force behind the creation of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance and has been a trustee since our founding in 1989. Dave recruited PPA's beloved first board chair, Mike Huber, and took on the position himself when Mike was no longer able to serve. As chair he has provided valuable guidance, overseeing significant growth in PPA's membership base and in our endowment as well as increases in the number of PPA staff in key areas. PPA has greatly benefited from his perspective based on a lifetime of environmental activism and policy making as we continue to fight major battles to protect the Pinelands.

PPA is fortunate that Jim Barnshaw agreed to succeed Dave as board chair. Jim is a retired physician. After 12 years of volunteer work with the Adirondack Forty-Sixers and The Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness, Jim began to focus his volunteer energies in the Pine Barrens, where he has spent many days hiking and canoeing, having resided as a youth in Merchantville, NJ. We look forward to Jim's leadership in continuing PPA's efforts to protect and preserve New Jersey's Pinelands.

What is the Pinelands Commission?

The Pinelands Commission is an independent state agency overseen by a 15-member board of unpaid Commissioners. Seven members are appointed by the Governor of New Jersey, and confirmed by the state Senate; one member is appointed by each of the seven Pinelands counties; and one member is appointed by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

Their regular monthly meetings are open to the public and they need to see and hear from you. There is always time for general public comments on the agenda.

Upcoming Meetings:
Fri., March 13th, 9:30 am
Fri., April 10th, 9:30 am

Contact Information:
New Jersey Pinelands Commission
P.O. Box 359
15 Springfield Road
New Lisbon, NJ 08064
Ph: (609) 894-7300
www.nj.gov/pinelands

Get Commission Email Alerts:
E-mail info@njpines.state.nj.us and ask to be included on Pinelands News and Events Alerts. Include your name.
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Jessica Ritter Sanchez, Ph.D.
Water Resource Planner
Barbara Trought
Community Activist
Robert Tucker, Ph.D.
Retired Scientist

Carleton K. Montgomery
Executive Director, Pinelands Preservation Alliance

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Calendar of Events
Pinelands Programs and Field Trips
February to March 2015

The events listed below are just a few of the great Pinelands trips this winter.

Visit www.pinelandsalliance.org and click on Event Calendar for a complete listing of Pinelands programs and trips provided by a wide variety of groups and organizations.

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Owl Prowl - Historic Whitesbog Village
Fri., Feb. 20, 5pm to 7pm, 120 Whitesbog Rd, Browns Mills, NJ
The great horned owl is busy getting ready for matting/nesting season. Learn about native owls and their behaviors to help and then take an evening walk in the woods. Wear appropriate footwear and dress for the weather. Binoculars and flashlight are also recommended. Meet at the General Store. Pre-registration is required. Fee $10. To register, call (609) 894-9311 x3027. Course #: CFP 522 80
Sponsored by Burlington County College Pinelands Institute for Natural & Environmental Studies

Canoe/Kayak the Oswego River (Burlington Co.)
Sun., Feb. 22, 10:00 am, Sponsored by the West Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club
Meet at Lake Oswego and paddle 8 miles on the “Jewel of the Pinelands”. Experienced winter Pines paddlers only. Contact leaders to confirm trip and participation. George & Leona F, 609-259-3734 or leona@pineypaddlers.com

Canoe/Kayak the Great Egg Harbor River (Atlantic Co.)
Sat., March 7, 10:00 am, Sponsored by the West Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club
We’re paddling from Penny Pot to Weymouth Furnace. Meet at Harley Dawn Diner, Black Horse Pike/Rte 322. Arrive early for breakfast! Experienced winter Pines paddlers only. Contact leaders to confirm trip and participation. George & Leona F, 609-259-3734 or leona@pineypaddlers.com

Canoe/Kayak the Tundras (Atlantic Co.)
Sat., March 7, 10:00 am, Sponsored by the West Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club
Hike (Burlington Co.)
Sun., March 15, 10:00 am, Sponsored by the West Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club

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Find more Pinelands events on our website: www.pinelandsalliance.org and click on Events Calendar

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Email: Leona@pineypaddlers.com or cancels. George & Leona F,609-259-3734 or phone: 609-259-3734. Pre-registration is required. Course #: CFP 272 80
Sponsored by Burlington County College Pinelands Institute for Natural & Environmental Studies

Canoe/Kayak the Rancocas Creek (Burlington Co.)
Sun., March 29, 10:30 am, Sponsored by the West Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club
Experienced cold weather /water paddlers only. Contact leaders to confirm trip. George & Leona F, 609-259-3734 or by email at leona@pineypaddlers.com
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SCAN: Scan this code to get to PPA’s website
This code can be scanned and read by a Smart Phone using a QR Code Reader app available from iTunes or Android web stores

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ALL MEMBERS RECEIVE:
A PPA membership card
A year’s subscription to Inside the Pinelands
A PPA window sticker
Discounts on PPA merchandise and events
Sponsors receive a copy of The Pine Barrens: Up Close & Natural DVD
Patrons receive John McPhee’s seminal book The Pine Barrens
Benefactors receive The Pine Barrens of New Jersey, a photographic history of this region
Chairman’s Circle members receive the book Seasons of the Pines and a personalized tour of the Pinelands

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