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PINELANDS



Drilling for New Jersey Natural Gas pipeline in Upper Freehold Township in June. Photo credit: Patti Caruso.

Drilling Stopped on New Jersey Natural Gas Pipeline

by Rhyan Grech, Policy Advocate

Underground drilling for the construction of the Southern Reliability Link (SRL) pipeline by New Jersey Natural Gas (NJNG) was halted by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in a letter dated July 8, 2020. The letter was issued after a series of recent accidents occurred impacting both residents and the environment during the months of April and June.

This is a significant victory for the Pinelands and residents. It comes after years of opposition by the Pinelands Preservation Alliance and others to stop a project that has been demonstrated to be unnecessary and dangerous. Unfortunately, some construction activities (like trenching and laying pipe) can continue.

The SRL is disastrous for the Pinelands, which is the largest open space on the eastern seaboard and recognized for its biodiversity by the United Nations. It would connect to a compressor station in Chesterfield and run 28 miles of pipe through Burlington, Monmouth, and Ocean Counties and through the Preservation Area of the Pinelands National Reserve. NJNG has claimed the pipeline is for reliability, and acknowledged it is not for necessity. Independent reports counter the claim that the pipeline will ever be needed for reliable service, even in the case of catastrophic failure elsewhere in the system.

Pinelands Preservation Alliance brought legal challenges against the pipeline that are still working their way through the courts. Despite this fact, NJNG began construction in December 2018.

Residents of Province Line Road in Upper Freehold Township have been especially impacted by the construction since the COVID-19 outbreak. Idling equipment generated fumes that are inescapable to families adhering to stay at home orders. Trucks blocked the road, sometimes both lanes at once, and residents have been unable to receive deliveries of essential supplies. Construction workers are at increased risk because they cannot easily conform to CDC guidelines such as

Inside The Pinelands

A Message from the Staff at the Pinelands Preservation Alliance

year by the Pinelands Preservation Alliance

Executive Editor Carleton Montgomery

Editor

Becky Free

PPA Staff Isabella Castiglioni Tom Dunn Andrew Gold Rhyan Grech Audra Hardoon Jason Howell Alicia Plaag Ryan Rebozo Jaclyn Rhoads Stephen Sebastian Jeff Tober Jane Wiltshire

Pinelands Adventures Rob Ferber Robert Laucks Donald Sulewski John Volpa

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The killing of George Floyd and protests around the country remind all of us of the long history of racial injustice in our country. The team at PPA is listening and thinking about what we can bring as an organization to achieving justice and genuine community among the people of our region. We also believe that fighting – one day, eliminating – racism is essential to the success of PPA's mission and that of other environmental activists.

One reason PPA exists is to preserve natural areas and resources for the benefit of people. To live that mission means to ensure everyone in our society has ready access to the But we know from Pinelands. experience and statistics that Black and Latinx families visit our state and national parks at a much lower rate than White families. This includes the Pinelands National Reserve. In fact, new government data published by ABC News in July shows that just 23% of visitors to our 419 national parks were people of color. Black Americans remain the most underrepresented group making up only 6% of visitors to national parks.

We are learning that this disparity has many causes, but is based on real experience. Racial profiling and stereotyping remain a big concern for many people of color in the outdoors along with fear of harassment and violence from law enforcement and other users.

The fear and concern of Black people in the outdoors was illustrated by the experience of Christian Cooper, a senior editorial director at Health Science Communications, a birder, and a Black man. Mr. Cooper was birding in Central Park in New York City in May, the same day George Floyd was killed. He asked a woman to put a leash on her dog and she called the police to say she was being threatened by a Black man. The details of this incident are welldocumented and show the deep racial bias that exists in our society, which led this woman to highlight that he was a Black man while on the phone with the police.

We believe that the Pinelands and New Jersey's other natural places will only survive in the long run if all segments of society know, love and speak out for preserving these treasures. New Jersey's conservation groups and their supporters are overwhelmingly White, while the society in which we work is increasingly diverse in ethnicity, background and origin.

Our organizations are not representative of the diversity of our society. This fact restricts our political power, deprives environmental groups of ideas and energies that would help them succeed, and inevitably sends a message that conservation is pretty much a White endeavor.

For now, we are listening and each finding our own personal ways to be involved. But PPA needs soon to move beyond listening and talking to doing. What should PPA be doing that we aren't doing now, or what do we need to do better? We have some ideas, but need more input from others. If you have views on this, please contact us and let us know your thoughts.

Reach out to Becky Free, Director of Communication & Membership with your thoughts.

Email: becky@pinelandsalliance.org.

Mourning the Loss of Candy Ashmun

by Carleton Montgomery, Executive Director

All of us at PPA mourn the passing of Candace McKee Ashmun, known to all as Candy, who died in May at the age of 96. Candy was one of the key figures in the generation that created the environmental movement in New Jersey. In 1979, Governor Byrne asked Candy to serve as a founding member of the Pinelands Commission. She answered that call and served continuously on the Commission until her death, the last original member of the Pinelands Commission. That dedication over so many years gave her unequaled insights and wisdom on the policies and controversies the Commission faced during its first forty years.

Candy was a fixed star in the Pinelands universe. A fount of wisdom based on unequaled experience and commitment. A savvy but never jaded strategist in the never-ending struggle to keep the forces of destruction at bay. A demanding leader of our movement. One of those few extraordinary individuals who became our conscience, the very embodiment of the world-view and values that are so central to our personal and professional identities.

The very day I started work at Pinelands Preservation Alliance on May 4, 1998, Candy called me to introduce herself and make sure I was wasting no time getting on the job – I think specifically on Pinelands Commission appointments. There was to be no easy transition into this completely new job for me! From that day on, I always knew that I was answerable for my actions to Candy – but also that she was always there to talk, to provide encouragement, and to support all of us who shared her passion.

She could bring the big picture about why each rule and policy of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan was important to the long-term protection of the Pinelands. She could explain 'here's what we were thinking' and why it worked. When bad ideas were proposed to weaken the rules, she was usually able to prevent them from moving forward by presenting a reasoned explanation rooted in decades of Pinelands practice.

Candy was not only "the godmother of the Pines," but a force of nature in the cause of nature throughout the state. She was the founding executive director of the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC), served on the State Planning Commission, the state's Great Swamp Advisory Committee, the Fund for New Jersey Board, the Highlands Coalition and numerous other committees and boards. In all these roles, Candy brought a deep appreciation of the connections between growth and development policies in our crowded state, on the one hand, and the protection of natural resources as essential to human well-being and as valuable in themselves, on the other.

She was a personal hero and mentor to me, as she was to so many others. Her guidance shaped my understanding of how the Pinelands protection laws are supposed to work, and what we need to do to make them work better. Candy has joined the pantheon of Pinelands heroes who secured this unique and wonderful place for the people. Now it is up to us to keep the flame alive and make sure the Pinelands and all its wildlife, plants and waters survive intact for those who follow us.



Candace Ashmun

Explore the Pinelands National Reserve

with Pinelands Adventures!

We are excited to announce that we are open four days a week from Thurs. - Sun. for canoe and kayak rentals.

Fun for the whole family!

Visit **www.PinelandsAdventures.org** to plan your next adventure.

Reservations are required.

Pinelands Adventures 1005 Atsion Rd. Shamong, NJ 08088 609-268-0189

Pinelands Adventures is an initiative of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance and our members get 10% off all trips and programs.

Located within beautiful Wharton State Forest.

Pinelands Commission

The Commission's offices are closed due to the COVID-19 crisis. Their monthly meetings are open to the public via livestream on their YouTube channel.

You can call in and comment during that part of the agenda.

Next meeting dates: Aug. 14th, 9:30 am Sept. 11th, 9:30 am Oct. 9th, 9:30 am

Location: 15 Springfield Road New Lisbon, NJ 08064 Ph: (609) 894-7300 www.nj.gov/pinelands

First Harvest Goes to Those in Need

by Jeff Tober, Farm Manager

Rancocas Creek Farm is a new venture sponsored by PPA to take a farm that has been farmed conventionally for many decades. We are transforming it into a sustainable farm that will grow chemical-free food, and strive to build soil health, promote biodiversity and involve the larger community in a variety of ways.

We have a few goals for the farm which include: Creating a farm business that will produce organically grown produce, herbs, fruit and flowers that will be economically sustainable and enrich soil health. Implementing a soil and stormwater management plan to reduce soil erosion and absorb stormwater that would otherwise flood into Vincentown and the Rancocas Creek. Developing a farm that produces both annual and perennial crops, reduces tillage, and achieves a diverse pallet of plant communities to support healthy pollinator communities. We want to involve a lot of people at the farm in the form employees, of apprentices, volunteers, and customers. We hope to show that good farming practices are a part of environmental stewardship and go hand-inglove with the protection of our amazing Pinelands.

In March, we received a Roots for Rivers grant allowing us to begin to address stormwater issues on the property. This program, funded by The Watershed Institute and The Nature Conservancy, helps restore floodplains with native plantings. They provide technical assistance to design restoration projects and funding to cover the cost of plants and materials. Planting the native trees and shrubs in the farm's lower. wetter areas reduces stormwater runoff, improves water quality and

provides pollinator habitat as well as wind break on the farm. Thanks to this grant PPA staff, board members and volunteers honored the 50th anniversary of Earth Day in April by planting over 1,100 native trees and shrubs. This was done in accordance with social distancing guidelines. The trees, provided by Pinelands Nursery, are all native species suitable for wetter soils. Without protection from deer damage the trees likely would not fare well, hence the protective tubes you may have noticed on the farm. These tubes will be removed when the trees are established and reach a certain height.

Vegetable production and harvest has begun, and we have been able to provide food to those in need during this exceedingly difficult time. In June we obtained a \$10,000 grant from the Princeton Area Community Foundation's COVID-19 Relief & Recovery Fund to provide over 2 tons of fresh produce to food pantries, distribution sites and soup kitchens such as the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK), New Beginnings Pantry and NJ Farmers Against Hunger.

We are also able to donate healthy food to residents in Hammonton thanks to our partnership with Allies in Caring (AIC) and our work with the Hammonton Health Coalition. On June 22nd, our farm's first harvest of 200 lbs. of summer squash, zucchini, beets, kale, and Swiss Chard went to Hammonton families in need. The produce was delivered to AIC in Hammonton. Their staff took bags of produce to local families affected by COVID-19, who lost jobs and are caring for children with disabilities, or who struggle with mental health issues. AIC worked with El Comite de

Apoyo a Los Trabajadores Agricolas (CATA-The Farmworkers Support Committee) and Migrant Worker Outreach to provide produce to farm laborers working in the region's farm fields.

We are also selling produce to restaurants, farm stands, wholesalers, and CSAs. When weddings resume, we look forward to partnering with Jeffrey Miller Catering.

We have planted blueberry fields, an Asian pear orchard and a blackberry patch for future production. We are aggressively using soil building cover crops, making and spreading compost, and procuring farm equipment. Little Construction is in the process of building a pole barn for farm use.

We have a part-time crew which has been working extremely hard to make our first season a successful one. Many thanks to Tori, Katie, Brent, Michelle, Alex, Karen, Sonrisa, Tina, Bridget, John and Ski. Also, many thanks to Farmer Ed Allen who farmed these 72-acres for many years. He helped establish cover crops in the fall of 2019 and is helping me to get the lay of the land on this property.

This is an exciting endeavor. I have known PPA for many years as my wife Becky has worked here since 2007 and I have always been impressed by the staff and the great work they do. I am already seeing how Rancocas Creek Farm is going to be a valuable place for many people to get food, find respite, learn some farming, meet others, and celebrate diversity. I invite you to come on out and see what we are doing (and maybe pull a few weeds?). Contact me by email: jeff@pinelandsalliance.org.

New Jersey Natural Gas Pipeline

continued from cover

enforcing six feet distance between workers.

In April it was discovered that crews were drilling without a permit in portions of Burlington County. In a memo sent to New Jersey Natural Gas on May 1st, the Burlington County Engineering Department detailed the violation in their cease and desist order. NJNG, however, ignored the stop-work order and continued construction on Province Line Road, which forms the boundary between Burlington and Monmouth Counties.

Then the unthinkable happened.

On June 19th construction crews experienced an inadvertent return while performing horizontal drilling in Upper Freehold Township. An "inadvertent return" takes place when drilling clay, chemicals, and liquid escapes to the surface through cracks in the bedrock they are drilling through. Drilling sludge appeared in nearby streams.

It also sent the mud into a fissure leading to the foundation of a house along the pipeline route, damaging the home's foundation and flooding its basement.

"I was almost too terrified to investigate after what had felt like an explosion in my house. I discovered huge cracks in my foundation, my basement floor, and even my walls! As I watched in horror water and sludge came pouring in through the cracks. I ran to the construction site and begged them to stop," said Barbara Fox-Cooper. Her house has been condemned by the building inspector. Now, during this pandemic, she must stay with friends.

Later that same week more drilling mud was found in streams nearby. Kevin Roberts, spokesperson for NJNG, said in an article on NJ.com that an inadvertent return is common. "It's unexpected when it happens, but it is common to drilling operations, so we do have mitigation plans in place to manage and contain these when they do occur." In fact, the industry itself accepts a 50% failure rate of horizontal directional drilling (HDD). Unfortunately, the technology is still considered a way to avoid impacts to streams and wetlands by drilling underneath them, and the permitting process is easier if HDD is used. Clearly, DEP regulations need to be updated to reflect the frequency of these accidents. Our safety shouldn't be left up to a coin flip.

Residents near the construction contacted DEP right away (possibly before NJNG did) and the agency began an investigation. Residents also informed Pinelands Preservation Alliance and the New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club, who initiated action and demanded that DEP and other relevant government agencies stop the pipeline. At the end of June hundreds of residents flooded DEP, the Board of Public Utilities, the Pinelands Commission, and the Governor's office with calls to stop drilling, overloading their phone systems. Protestors demonstrated at the drilling site and demanded that drilling stop.

On July 8th the New Jersey DEP suspended drilling construction pending investigation of the past impacts of this project, as well as what further risk lies ahead should construction continue. According to the suspension letter, "...activities within freshwater wetlands, transition areas, regulated waters and riparian zone shall cease immediately..." until NJDEP has the opportunity to evaluate "... the potential for additional impacts to public health, safety, welfare and/or the environment." However, regular trenching and laying of pipe continues, and residents are calling for a complete halt to the project.

We have now learned that there were several prior accidents in the Pinelands, which the Pinelands Commission staff knew of but did not report to the Commission or the public. Nor did they investigate the damage done or act to prevent further harms.

Our lawsuit to overturn the approval of this pipeline is pending with the Appellate Division of State Superior Court. We have petitioned that construction should stop until:

1. The causes and harms of the June 19th and all prior incidents are fully established by independent investigators, the results are shared with the public, and they can certify to the public that there will be no further accidents.

2. The Appeals Court decides the pending appeals against the SRL approvals. It is foolish and irresponsible to risk more harm to people and nature for a pipeline that may well be stopped by the Court in the coming months.

We will keep you informed about this project. If you have any questions please contact me at RhyanG@pinelandsalliance.org.



Barbara Fox-Cooper outside her house on June 19th (credit Agnes Marsala).

4th Annual Pinelands Juried Photographic Exhibit

by Steve Sebastian, Director of Philanthropy

Perhaps you have taken a drive on Route 539 from Whiting to Tuckerton. From your car, you mostly see endless pine trees. Chances are that you missed two beautiful Pine Barrens ecosystems along the way – Webbs Mill Cedar Swamp and the Pygmy Pine Plains at Warren Grove. Each is truly spectacular, and they are just two examples of the many special places in the Pines.

If we were to poll New Jerseyans about their knowledge of the Pinelands, most might only recognize it by name. Their knowledge of the Pines is only what they view while driving through it on the way to the shore. Fewer would truly know or appreciate what lies beyond these paved roads.

As the saying goes, "You won't protect what you don't love, and you can't love what you don't know."

With this in mind, we launched our inaugural Pinelands Juried Photographic Exhibition in 2017 to celebrate the natural beauty and rich cultural heritage of the New Jersey Pinelands National Reserve. We hoped that this would become the premier Pinelands photographic exhibition and help raise awareness of this natural treasure to a new and wider audience.

Our exhibits have been very well received right from the start! Photographers from around the state and beyond have submitted some beautiful images. Each exhibit has been well attended. There has also been some great press coverage, including an article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* for the past two years.

For our upcoming 4th Annual Pinelands photo exhibit, we have two exciting announcements. We

are honored to have renowned National Geographic photographer Michael Yamashita as our judge! Also, we launched our new online Pinelands Photo Gallery which contains all photo submissions from our previous (and future) exhibits. You can filter and search these images to quickly explore and enjoy the gallery. Check it out here: www.PinelandsAlliance.org/gallery.

Over \$2,000 in cash prizes will be awarded at the opening reception scheduled for March 27, 2021. Visit PinelandsPhotoExhibit.org to learn more about the exhibit, how to enter, and our judge, Michael Yamashita.

With summer in full swing and the parks open, now is the perfect time to venture out to discover all that the Pinelands has to offer. Bring your camera or cell phone and capture that perfect image. When you do, submit it to our exhibit and we will share it in our online gallery for all to enjoy. Help us raise awareness of Pines and the need to protect this natural treasure!

I will leave you with a couple of quotes from photographers who participated in our exhibits:

"Edward Abbey once said, 'A man on foot, on horseback or on a bicycle will see more, feel more, enjoy more in one mile than the motorized tourists can in a hundred miles.' For me, photography does exactly this thing. The camera is like a break that helps me slow down to engage more deeply with where I am in space and time. I find inspiration in what is often overlooked the simple things that are hidden in an intimate landscape." – Rafal Goraczniak

"Being from out of state, I originally thought the Pinelands was a just large tract of endless pine trees in the state of New Jersey. Then, recently, while exploring my photographic passion, I joined a tour group to visit selected Pinelands locations, which gave me a sense of how large an area it is, the diversity it contains and the *hope that it would last through many* lifetimes. I come back often to photograph there with the expectation of capturing images of subjects that I had not been aware of before: the quiet, raw, pristine, spaces containing reds, greens and browns, burbling brooks and rivers, along with flora and fauna. Things not seen or experienced in the inner *city.*" - Philip "Dutch" Bagley

Call for Artists!

4th Annual Pinelands Juried Photography Exhibit

Share your images taken within the boundaries of the Pinelands National Reserve! Landscape, flora, wildlife, and people will be accepted.

The exhibit will hang at our offices.

Registration deadline Jan. 21, 2021.

Over \$2,000 in cash prizes!

***Opening Reception** March 27, 2021 from 2-4pm

Exhibition Dates: March 29, 2021 - May 1, 2021

Judge: Michael Yamashita, National Geographic Photographer

Learn more online:

www.PinelandsPhotoExhibit.org

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Carleton K. Montgomery

Executive Director, Pinelands Preservation Alliance

Pinelands Adventures is our outdoor recreation program! Make your reservation today.



Pinelands Adventures is an initiative of PPA.

PinelandsAdventures.org

<u>Pre-Registration is required</u> <u>for all trips</u> and can be done online or by calling 609-268-0189.

Self-Guided River Trips

April thru October - Meet at Pinelands Adventures, 1005 Atsion Rd, Shamong NJ

Self-guided canoe or kayak trips down the Batsto or Mullica Rivers are available Thursday through Sunday. Trips take from 2-8 hours depending on your choice. Reservations are required. Canoes, single kayaks and double kayaks are available. You can also bring your own boat and they will handle the transportation.

Book your trip online at www.PinelandsAdventures.org or call 609-268-0189.

Visit the Pinelands!

Now is a great time to explore the Pinelands. Here is a list of state parks and forest begging for you to visit. Make sure you check with each location before you visit.

Atlantic County

Estell Manor County Park

This is a large, user-friendly park where you can hike, bike, picnic, fish, go sightseeing, exercise, visit the park's nature center, and really enjoy the Pine Barrens. The Fox Nature Center provides programs for enjoying the outdoors as well as displays about the local ecology. With its location on tributaries to the Great Egg Harbor, the park provides an excellent point to launch all manner of water

Calendar of Events *Pinelands Places To Go!*

Summer 2020

craft. Historic ruins in the park are well-explained in interpretive signs.

Burlington County

Bass River State Forest

Home to one of the first Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps, Bass River State Forest now provides easily accessible camping, swimming and hiking facilities. In addition to a swimming beach on Lake Absegami, the State Forest has eight walking of 1 to 3.2 miles through typical Pine Barrens habitats. Right now swimming is not open due to the COVID-19 crisis. Bass River State Forest is located at 762 Stage Road, Tuckerton, NJ. This state forest is in Burlington and Ocean County.

Brendan Byrne State Forest

Brendan Byrnes State Forest is over 37,000 acres with lovely trails that crisscross the forest and pass historic sites. A great place to visit is Pakim Pond. A beautiful small pond in the heart of the Pine Barrens, Pakim Pond is a wonderful place to explore forest and wetland habitats. A short trail wraps around the entire perimeter of the pond, and also connects to the Batona Trail. Accessible by paved road, the pond has a gazebo, picnic tables and grills, and restrooms. Another lovely spot is historic Whitesbog Village the historic site of a company town where the blueberry was first cultivated for commercial production by Elizabeth White. The village, now incorporated within Brendan T. Byrne State Forest, includes historic buildings and houses, cranberry bogs, blueberry fields, reservoirs and surrounding woodlands. The village area is managed by the Whitesbog Preservation Trust, and JJ White Cranberry Company, owned by the descendants of Elizabeth White, cultivates some of the cranberry bogs at the edge of the village.

Wharton State Forest

Wharton State Forest is New Jersey's largest state forest at 125,000 acres. There are many trails, roads and historic places to visit. A great place to start is historic Batsto

Village. Batsto is one of the most popular stops in the Pinelands. Originally founded as an ironworks in 1766, a restored village surrounds the original ironworks with information and displays on site to show how things were done "in the old days". The mill dam in the heart of the village creates Batsto Lake, a beautiful lake on which most Batsto River canoe and kayak trips end. The mansion is restored and open for tours, and the village includes a nature center, saw mill, general store and other early buildings. Batsto's Visitor Center is also the main office for Wharton State Forest, where camping permits, trail maps, and a gift shop can be found.

Ocean County

Double Trouble Village in Double Trouble State Forest

Double Trouble is the site of an old village dedicated to cranberry farming. Many of the historic buildings, including the cranberry packing house and the sawmill are intact and can be toured. Cedar Creek runs next to the village and is one of the Pine Barrens' most beautiful. The State Forest contains excellent hiking trails.

Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge

The Forsythe Refuge includes more than 47,000 acres of southern New Jersey coastal habitats and represents the fragile estuary ecosystems which are sustained by fresh water flowing from the interior Pine Barrens forests into the coastal marshes and bays. Located on one of the Atlantic Flyway's most active flight paths, the Refuge provides world-class birding opportunities. The Refuge also includes walking trails through increasingly rare coastal pine forest habitats. Start at the Visitor Information Center and Wildlife Drive on Great Creek Road in Galloway Township

Do you have an event that takes place in the Pinelands? Let us know.

Email:

becky@pinelandsalliance.org with the details.



Pinelands Preservation Alliance Bishop Farmstead 17 Pemberton Road Southampton, NJ 08088

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Benefactor	\$1,000	Benefactors receive The Pine Barrens of New Jersey, a photographic history of this region			
Chairman's Circle [Chairman's Circle members receive the book <i>Seasons of the Pines</i> and a personalized tour of the Pinelands			