



PINELANDS
PRESERVATION
ALLIANCE

Fall 2021

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Number 3

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Green Trading Post

December 11th
12 noon to 4:00 pm

This holiday bazaar offers gifts from local non-profits. Use your "greens" for good and for gifts this holiday season.

Location:

PinelandsAlliance
17 Pemberton Rd.
Southampton, NJ
08088

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INSIDE THE PINELANDS



New Jersey Natural Gas SRL pipeline construction on Tobias Avenue in 2019. Photo credit Agnes Marsala from People over Pipelines.

Lessons from Pipeline Victories and Defeats in the Pines

by Carleton Montgomery, Executive Director & Rhyan Grech, Policy Advocate

When the Pinelands National Reserve was created, and the Comprehensive Management Plan developed, it was the first of its kind in the country: a vast swath of land and water with an innovative regional protection and growth strategy, plus the laws to give it teeth. Dedicated public servants at the Pinelands Commission spent countless hours writing the regulations to bring the Pinelands project to life, and the Southern Reliability Link (SRL) methane gas pipeline was exactly the type of project the founders had in mind to prevent.

The interior of the Pinelands was designated as the core Preservation and Forest Areas, with development and more urban areas planned around the edges. The Pinelands was designed to provide for its thousands of residents while protecting natural resources by setting down strict growth boundaries and strong water and habitat protection rules. Large-scale development like highways and utility infrastructure in the Preservation Area are the antithesis of the intent, so these types of projects are

permitted only in growth areas or when truly required to meet the needs of existing residents inside the Pinelands.

When the South Jersey Gas pipeline was proposed across the Forest Area, it was not designed to meet any need of the Pinelands, and the Pinelands Commission rightfully voted it down. Thus began a chapter of the state agency becoming politicized when then-Governor Christie and local government replaced Commissioners who voted "no" with those who knew what was expected of them. The South Jersey Gas pipeline got its approval but died before construction started – a saga we described in our April/May 2019 newsletter.

The SRL pipeline was also approved by the newly-packed Pinelands Commission despite serving no genuine need or consumer demand. The Board of Public Utilities (BPU) exempted the pipeline from needing local approvals, so towns and the public didn't have an opportunity to carefully examine the project. The Pinelands Commission decided to read its

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Inside The Pinelands

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Get out and explore!

Our Pinelands Adventures Map is a great place to start.

Our goal is to help you get to know the Pine Barrens (if you don't already!). For a lot of people the Pine Barrens is that odd forest you drive through at 55 miles an hour on the way to the Jersey shore. It's the big area of green woods you see out the jet window as you fly in or out of Philadelphia International Airport, wondering "what is that down there?"

We know that figuring out where to go and what to do in the Pine Barrens, or Pinelands, can be difficult. While it is a National Reserve, there is no welcome center to go to for information. So we created the **Pinelands Adventures Map** to help you plan your visit!

This full-color map of the roads, rivers, forests, and historic sites of the Pinelands National Reserve is the only one of its kind! Plan your next adventure to one of the 14 Gateway Sites described on the backside of the map.

Unfolded it measures 36" by 28" and is printed on rip-resistant paper. Visit us on the web at www.pinelandsalliance.org and click on Explore for more ideas about where to go and what to do in the Pine Barrens.

The Pinelands Adventure Map is for sale for \$5. You can purchase it at our offices, at Pinelands

Adventures or you can order one through our online store and we will mail it to you.

Happy Exploring! And while you are out there don't forget that we are still accepting submissions to our Juried Pinelands Photography contest. The deadline is January 30, 2022.

Learn more about the exhibit:
www.PinelandsPhotoExhibit.org.



Pinelands Adventures - Planning for 2022

by Charles Johnson III, Director of Education & Allison Hartman, Assistant Director for Pinelands Adventures

Nestled in the heart of the Pinelands National Reserve, Pinelands Adventures offers people a chance to experience the unique Pine Barrens ecosystem and history through a variety of activities. Pinelands Adventures has persevered through a year of pandemics. Despite new restrictions and requirements, the Adventures staff was able to provide more than 5,445 people with a meaningful experience in the Pine Barrens.

Our self-guided trips are a great way to experience the pristine Pinelands waterways, and in 2021 we offered self-guided paddle trips on six different routes along the Mullica and Batsto Rivers. The routes range from two to eleven miles, and they usually take anywhere from an hour and a half up to eight hours (the eight-hour trip can also be split into an overnight camping trip with two days of paddling).

Our most popular trip is the six-mile Quaker Bridge to Batsto Lake paddle, which goes through one of the most remote places in New Jersey. This trip begins by traveling an old stage-coach road to Quaker Bridge. From there, you paddle the narrow and winding Batsto river through a dense forest of pitch pine, red maple, and Atlantic white cedar to the historic town of Batsto. Along the way, a lucky paddler could spot deer, beaver, otters, turtles, pickerel, sunfish...the list of unique and unusual species goes on and on! Kayaking and canoeing on the Mullica River is also a truly incredible experience. You move through narrow passages surrounded by tall cedar stands and navigate the twists and turns of the river. In one spot, the river opens to a wider Beaver Pond fringed with beautiful white waterlilies, yellow spatterdock, and purple pickerelweed flowers.

Pinelands Adventures also offered guided paddle programs, and guided hikes; these programs are a photographer's field day! Our guided

river programs included Mullica River 101, Batsto River Tour, Atsion Lake Adventure, and Autumn on the Batsto. Our guided hike programs included the Harrisville History Tour, Birding in the Pines, Nature Rx, and Industries in the Pines. These programs allowed participants to see the diversity that exists within the Pine Barrens. This area is well-known as being a post-industrial forest with wonderful, peaceful rivers, but it is also home to top-notch bird watching and beautiful historical ruins, and a rich folklore tradition. Many also find the forest to be a place to find stillness and spiritual healing. We also offered canoe and kayak lessons throughout the season. Our ACA-certified instructors led three-hour classes teaching people the basics of paddling canoes and kayaks. These introductory programs were designed to help new paddlers feel comfortable and competent on the water while learning proper paddling techniques.

Launching in January 2022, Pinelands Adventures is excited to announce a new series of webinars that will focus on the winter season in the Pine Barrens. Beginning with the migration of waterfowl in January, web-based lectures will highlight many of the wildlife happenings through the colder months. In February we will dive into the vernal pools of the Pines, and the series will finish in March with a look at life in the wetlands and woodlands of the Pine Barrens. These webinars will provide an abundance of education to all those who attend.

Pinelands Adventures' paddling season will reopen in April 2022. We will be offering the self-guided trips and guided tours many have come to know and love, and we look forward to launching new programs for the 2022 season. Keep an eye on our website and social media in the spring for updates and more

information!

We plan on holding Pine Barrens Discovery Tours and as well as bringing lesson programs to your classroom (or virtually) about the Pine Barrens Ecosystem. During our classroom presentations, Pinelands Adventures provides interdisciplinary learning experiences that are correlated to the New Jersey Standards of Learning. In-person activities are field-based and use the context of the Pine Barrens to bring complex concepts to life. The Pine Barrens Discovery Tours start with an easy walk exploring the uplands, its native plants, and insects while discovering what makes the Pine Barrens such a unique ecosystem. Moving downhill, into the coolness of an Atlantic White Cedar swamp, we'll examine some of the carnivorous plants found among its sphagnum mosses. Then enjoy paddling the beaver pond, stopping to net some of the denizens of the deep, their existence opens a different chapter in the Pine Barrens story.

Keep a lookout for the relaunch of our McPhee Pine Barrens Today Tour. The tour allows participants to step back in time to see the places made famous in John McPhee's landmark book, *The Pine Barrens*. In addition, join Pinelands Preservation Alliance and save 10% on your trip or rental with Pinelands Adventures.

RANCOCAS CREEK FARM

Buy a farm share and get a weekly pickup of fresh vegetables, herbs and flowers from June to October.

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Southampton NJ 08088
609-859-8860 ext 130

Learn more or sign up here:
pinelandsalliance.org/join-the-csa

Development Projects on the Horizon

By Andrew Gold, Legal Director

While the Pinelands Commission continues to function at partial capacity, life goes on in the Pinelands and development activity is accelerating. Various types of building projects are cropping up, and only a robust, active, and fully staffed Commission can ensure that the Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) will be upheld and that the Pinelands will be protected for future generations.

The Commission itself is statutorily provided 15 seats, but only 11 are currently filled. Some members do not consistently attend meetings, hampering the legal ability of the body to vote and take other action on critical issues, since eight affirmative votes are required for official decisions. The governor appoints members to seven of these seats, which the Senate confirms - and herein lies the obstacle, because four of these seats have been held hostage as political footballs. Seven more members serve as representatives of the seven counties lying within the Pinelands, and the Camden County seat is now vacant. Additionally, the U.S. Department of the Interior appoints the fifteenth member, and that seat is also vacant.

These are all lost opportunities for true dedicated Pinelands advocates to carry out the mission of the CMP and renew the Commission's historic legacy of conservation. As if the Commissioner vacancies were not enough, the critical role of Executive Director is also open. Fortunately, the Commission is set to begin interviews for the position soon. It is absolutely crucial for the future of the Pinelands that this role is permanently filled with a competent and proactive individual who is willing to enforce the laws that protect the region.

Commission staff have noted in recent meetings that fee revenue is up, indicating increased development activity. That is evident in places like Ocean County where suburbia is expanding, often threatening wildlife habitats and eating up undeveloped space right up to the border of more protected areas. Given people's continued movement from major urban centers outward, we expect this migration to the suburbs and beyond to continue, and development pressure in and around the Pinelands is unlikely to decrease. New warehouses are another common sight in South Jersey, similarly, spurred on by COVID-related increases in online commerce. Developers have filed applications for these often-massive buildings at the Pinelands Commission and we expect more to come.

Looking further (although not that far) into the future, climate change will alter New Jerseyans' lives in ways that are becoming apparent to more people, as flooding and extreme weather events are more routine. The viability of many coastal communities is doubtful as sea levels rise and storms intensify. Some - perhaps many - residents may retreat inland further into the Pines, where pressure for new housing would then increase even more.

On the other hand, progress on transitioning the state's economy away from fossil fuels is driving development like solar farms. But even these projects can conflict with other environmental goals: what to do when a developer wants to cut down a tract of pristine forest or take over prime farmland for a gargantuan solar installation? Other

more novel issues are arising: is a legal marijuana growing facility an agriculture or an industrial operation? Different answers could lead to different outcomes on where such facilities can be located in the Pinelands. Questions like these are not theoretical. The Pinelands Commission needs to be ready and equipped to navigate these issues and balance land uses in the manner that the drafters of the CMP intended - ultimately to conserve this special place.

Green Trading Post

*December 11th
12 noon to 4 pm*

Our annual holiday bazaar is back! Vendors include:

Clarence Fennimore - Decoy Carver

James Still Historic Site & Education Center

Paul Evans Pedersen Jr. - Pine Barrens Diamonds Jewelry

Pine Barrens Post

Pinelands Adventures

Pinelands Folk Music & Basketry

Rancocas Creek Farm

Shaker Oval Boxes by Harry Silvers

Whitesbog Preservation Trust

Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge

Plus meet authors - Richard Lewis, William Lewis, Kate Schulze-Bahn, and Greg Vizzi

This event takes place in the barn at our headquarters.

www.PinelandsAlliance.org

Lessons from Pipeline Victories and Defeats

continued from cover

rules as having no procedure for private, commercial applications that were exempt from local approval, so the new group of Commissioners threw together a process that limited public involvement and avoided any evidentiary hearing where the company's and staff's factual claims could be vetted and challenged. At every turn, state agencies chose to rely on New Jersey Natural Gas (NJNG) assertions over independent experts; chose to give NJNG the benefit of the doubt and dismiss the dangers that came to pass; chose to twist its regulations to allow the pipeline to be built in the Pinelands Preservation Area.

Thousands of activists from around the state, partner organizations and PPA fought this pipeline for 6 years. Once construction began, the spills began – and when they were belatedly reported to the public, our coalition jumped into action to shine a light on the destruction being brought on our forests, wetlands and streams. We held protests, wrote letters to the editor, signed petitions, testified at agency meetings, and filed a total of nine lawsuits. The Pinelands Commission kept information about 6 of the spills quiet for a year and a half, and the DEP only issued violations when a home was condemned after one of the spills caused structural damage. Even still, construction was only temporarily delayed as DEP subsequently allowed the project to resume.

In early 2021, the New Jersey Appeals Court ruled against our challenges to the agency decisions. Construction was completed in May, and the SRL pipeline is now said to be in service. NJNG has already gone to the BPU for permission to raise their customers' rate to recapture the 308 million dollars spent on the pipeline. To date, the Pinelands Commission has dealt no penalty to NJNG for the damage caused in the Pines, and

DEP's minimal fines were settled with NJNG for even less money.

This is a story of state agencies utterly failing the people of New Jersey, the Pinelands, and in their missions. Instead of protecting natural resources, which include drinking water sources for more than 1 million people, these public institutions stood to the side as NJNG and its parent company made their profit off an unnecessary new fossil fuel pipeline. The New Jersey appeals court denied our appeals in decisions that, to be generous, are glib and thoughtlessly deferential to the executive branch agencies. The performance of our politicians, the Pinelands Commission and Department of Environmental Protection, and the courts have been profoundly disappointing in this controversy. Despite the hard work and dedication of our coalition, we couldn't overcome the influence of powerful private interests on people unwilling to stand up to them.

The key lessons in our minds from this debacle are, first, that when the wrong people are in charge of enforcing Pinelands protections, we will get bad outcomes no matter what the statutes and regulations say; second, that no one should think New Jersey's courts will serve as a safeguard against undue influence and arbitrary decisions by government officials – that's just not what our courts have become; and, third, that today's politicians are prepared to interfere in the Pinelands to push favored development, but not to stand up for the Pinelands when we need them.

What does this all mean for those who love the Pinelands and worry for the future?

We need to win champions among the state's politicians. Pinelands protection isn't supposed to be

politicized – that's why it's placed primarily in the hands of the Pinelands Commission, a legally independent agency. But in practice politicians matter, usually for all the wrong reasons in recent years. And most politicians are not known for long-term thinking. Today's politicians seem to take the good things that the Pinelands brings to their constituents for granted, figuring that no one project they or one of their friends wants built will do too much harm. This is the kind of thinking that so often leads to the gradual, piecemeal destruction of irreplaceable natural treasures.

We need to do everything we can to ensure the agency staff responsible for implementing the rules are people of courage who actually care about protecting the people and resources whose health is at stake in their decisions. That means talking to our Governors, Pinelands Commissioners and Commissioners of Environmental Protection to demand the right people be given these great responsibilities and supported when they do right by the Pinelands.

The Pinelands Commission currently has 4 vacancies. Of the remaining Commissioners, several can barely be bothered to attend monthly meetings, and others are clearly determined to allow this type of development within the Pinelands. We need people who will bring a renewed passion for conservation, and we need courageous public officials who will do the right thing, even when it's hard.

Thank You!

To our members and volunteers who support the Pinelands Preservation Alliance. You really make a difference! We are so lucky to have your support.

Making Nature Accessible

by Becky Free, Director of Membership & Communications

Everyone can benefit from time in nature that is tailored to their needs and abilities. Every way of being in nature, from active recreation to simple “forest bathing”, brings physical and mental health benefits. It is well-known that Americans overall are spending less time in natural places, and this appears to be especially true for the population of people with physical, developmental or other disabilities.

New Jersey’s Pinelands provides the people of our region with exceptional natural areas across more than a million acres of forests, streams and ponds in the nation’s most crowded state. But many people do not take advantage of these resources because they, or those for whom they care, have physical or other disabilities that make going into most natural places uncomfortable, unsafe or impossible. This is due to the limited number of well-maintained accessible sites and because there is no comprehensive and reliable guide to the accessible sites that do exist.

The Pinelands Preservation Alliance wants to help overcome these barriers so everyone can enjoy the benefits of time in nature and visit the parks, forests and preserves which our state and communities have protected. We believe that persons with disabilities both deserve and want to enjoy the physical, psychological and spiritual benefits of the natural places which our state and communities have preserved.

Our project called The Pinelands is for Everyone is funded by an Inclusive Healthy Communities Grant from the Division of Disability Services, New Jersey Department of Human Services. This is a new state program that is funding great work around New Jersey to help people with disabilities improve their health and quality of life. We are

collaborating with two extraordinary partner organizations, *Disability Rights New Jersey* and *Hopeworks* to work with the disability community to make the Pinelands more accessible.

We know it is essential to listen first, then take action, so we have held two online town hall discussions to learn from people identifying as disabled and their caregivers about the challenges they face when visiting parks and natural areas. Watch the replay of both town halls on our website and take the survey to share your thoughts. These ongoing conversations are helping to ensure this project includes people with disabilities and that our collective efforts really address the obstacles people face in enjoying natural areas of the Pinelands. If you want information on additional online discussions and focus groups, please let us know.

One key outcome of this project is a new website and mobile app that feature an interactive map showing nature sites with some degree of accessibility, like a wheelchair-accessible trail. The website will be available via mobile, desktop and tablet and will allow for user generated content so that the accessibility of natural areas can be kept up to date by the people who are using them. By gathering feedback from users, the app will inform land managers about ways they can improve the accessibility of public and nonprofit preserves. The website and app will launch next spring.

We also need to expand the number and variety of accessible nature sites, so we are developing concept plans to create or improve at least four specific priority sites that enjoy local support and are within or adjacent to underserved communities which lack an existing, accessible nature park. And

we are already working with Pemberton Township to create a new accessible trail at Pemberton Lake.

Finally, we will take all we have learned and produce a report about the state of accessibility to nature sites in this region, identifying and describing all existing sites and proposing actions to improve the number and range of accessible sites. We will also facilitate a continuing forum for discussion, knowledge-sharing and the creation of new partnerships around new initiatives around this issue.

Our goal is to make sure everyone has opportunities to enjoy the benefits of being in nature, and to win new supporters to the cause of Pinelands preservation.

We need your help, too. If you are willing to share your experiences as a person with a disability or a caregiver, or would like to help with our trail projects, please email Becky at becky@pinelandsalliance.org or call her at 609-859-8860 ext 121.

Call for Artists! Pinelands Juried Photography Exhibit

\$2000 in cash prizes!

Finalist’s photos will hang in our beautiful renovated 1932 barn. All photographs submitted will be part of our New Jersey Pinelands Online Photo Gallery.

Deadline to enter
January 30, 2022

*Proceeds benefit the Pinelands
Preservation Alliance.*

More information:
www.PinelandsPhotoExhibit.org
or call 609-859-8860.

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Executive Director, Pinelands Preservation Alliance

Calendar of Events

Visit the Pinelands!

Fall & Winter 2021

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 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. 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 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 culti-

vated 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 includes walking trails through rare coastal pine forest habitats. Start at the Visitor Center and Wildlife Drive on Great Creek Road in Galloway Township.

Pinelands Commission Meeting

Friday, Dec. 10th starting at 9:30 am. Monthly meetings are open to the public and are held via livestream on YouTube.

The Pinelands Commission is the state agency that oversees conservation and development within the Pinelands. They meet on the 2nd Friday of the month. They continue to conduct meetings virtually. Meeting agendas, link to livestream and a phone number to call can be found at www.nj.gov/pinelands.

Green Trading Post

Dec. 11th from 12 noon to 4pm. Pinelands Preservation Alliance, 17 Pemberton Rd, Southampton, NJ.

Organized as a traditional holiday bazaar, the Green Trading Post offers crafts, merchandise and memberships from local non-profit organizations. Use your "greens" for good and for gifts this holiday season. List of vendors on our website.

Shop our Online Store for books, apparel, maps and more!

Our online store is always open! Purchase books, maps, t-shirts and hats! Items are shipped to you or your loved one or you can arrange a curbside pickup at our offices. Find the store here:

www.pinelandsalliance.org

Do you have an event that takes place in the Pinelands?

Let us know so we can put it on our calendar.

Email:

becky@pinelandsalliance.org



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- ♦ PPA membership card
- ♦ Year-long subscription to Inside the Pinelands
- ♦ PPA window sticker
- ♦ 10% off at Pinelands Adventures and on PPA merchandise

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

*Our mission is to protect and
preserve the natural and cultural
resources of
New Jersey's Pinelands.*



Please Recycle this newsletter! When finished give it to a friend or neighbor and encourage them to learn about PPA's mission and programs.