

## **Educational Outreach and Communications Division Update**

March 2024

Submitted by Tim Motz, Educational Outreach and Communications Division

### **Communications**

- **The commission's 2023 Annual Report has been completed and is in the process of being circulated to elected officials and other interested parties. As with our redesign overhaul last year, this year's report highlights all major commission accomplishments of the year in a visually striking way. The report includes reports on the major accomplishments of every division as well as general commission highlights and important information about the Central Pine Barrens and the Long Island Pine Barrens Protection Act.**
- **Preliminary work is underway on this year's video for the commission's annual Cooperators Meeting. As with last year, when we focused on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pine Barrens Protection Act, this year's video will focus on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Law Enforcement Council, and the challenges of protecting the region against polluters, rampaging ATVs and clearing in general. Filming on the video will begin next month, with the assistance of a communications intern we are in the process of hiring to assist in filming and editing the video. The video will cover various aspects of the LEC's history and interviews with some of the individuals who have been essential to the council's work.**

### **Barrens to Bay Summer Camp**

- **Three major aspects of preparing for the 2024 Barrens to Bay Summer Camp are underway:**
  1. **I am in the process of interviewing and bringing on board both paid and volunteer counselors to assist in the management of the camp.**
  2. **Registration for camp is underway, and, to date, we're already completely booked for four of the six sessions, and slots in the remaining two sessions are going quickly.**
  3. **I am working on various programmatic enhancements to make an already great camp even better. Many of the enhancements will involving engaging and educational ways to teach campers about some of the more fascinating species in the Central Pine Barrens.**

### **“A Day in the Life” Program**

- **We have begun preparations for the 2024 “A Day in the Life” of a local waterway season, which occurs over eight consecutive Fridays in the fall at locations all over Long Island. One major focus of our work this year will be to seek out additional schools to conduct student science at an expanded number of locations within the Central Pine Barrens. We also seeking to develop and implement an enhanced data collection system.**



## Science and Stewardship Division Update March 20, 2023

### Administration

- **Staffing:** The seasonal prescribed fire crew all have onboarded and have been focused on training, team development, equipment outfitting and logistical pre-fire planning to prepared for prescribed fire operations. All crew members join the Commission with experience conducting wildland fire operations. The crew is led by Brian Bagozzi, Engine/Single Resource Boss who returns for his second season with the Commission, has extensive experience working for federal agencies on wildland and prescribed fire operations across the country. Ron Bagan, a retired paramedic from Nassau County Polic, returns for this third season and 13<sup>th</sup> year helping to conduct prescribed fire operations in the Central Pine Barrens as Squad Boss Trainee providing direct leadership to the crew. Nathan LeClair, Squad Boss Trainee is a certified arborist who has worked on western wildfires and serves as a member of the Connecticut Interstate Fire Crew; Rob Kovacs, Squad Boss Trainee with extensive experience in wildland fire operations serving on Helitak missions, advancing structural firefighting and heavy rescue as a firefighter and paramedic. Justin Mangibin, a Long Island Native, serves as prescribed firefighter, having recently obtained his qualifications for wildland fire and serving as a NYSDEC volunteer on pile burning operations.
- **Planning:** Developing short and long-term strategic work plans remains a primary focus of Division leadership, with a strategy for improved structure and development of staff work plans, to strengthen focus, efficiency and impact related to the mission of CPBC. A staff training plan for the year as well as performance reviews and budget planning continue to be developed and refined in concert with the larger planning initiative. Once planning focus is in place, the development of formal long-term plan will commence.

### Prescribed Fire Program:

- *Administration:*
  - The hiring and onboarding process has been the primary focus of administration for this reporting cycle including updating and advancing orientation, setting up office space, identifying priorities and ensuring training schedule for prescribed fire crew as well as Commission staff to ensure safety with the onset of the field season.
  - Uploading of the prescribed fire program contracts and submission of quarterly reports and vouchers is delayed by the transfer from grants gateway to the States Financial System platform. As soon as this commences, contract will be uploaded and executed and vouchers from 2023-24 will be submitted for reimbursement.
  - Use of Spinney Road Well Field Building for storage of prescribed fire equipment especially when operations occur on the eastern side of the Central Pine Barrens continues to commence with SCWA as well as securing electric access to plug in the shoreline charger for the Type 6 Fire Engine.
  - Trainings for beginning season have been coordinated with local and in house professionals for such trainings as first aid, CPR/AED, Stop the Bleed, Blood Borne pathogens, Wildland Fire Refresher, Engine, Chain Saw Refresher, Trailing and Winch operation.
- *Equipment:*
  - The Type 6 Fire Engine has been fully put into in serve and provided operational support for pile burning operations lead by NYSDEC. Finer outfitting continues as final accessories and equipment is procured as well as through direct operational use. Standard operating procedures continue to be refined for driving, trailing, maintenance and winterization being developed that will be added to the Prescribed Fire operational guidebook for reference and training. The final major up-fit of installing the radio system will commence once the radio is received and programmed by the outfitter. All first aid equipment has been inspected and installed on the engine.
- *Prescribed Burn Plan Development:*

- USFWS review and approvals of prescribed burn plans have been conducted allowing for operations to commence reflective of documented prescribed fire mitigations implemented to protect the endangered Northern Long-eared Bat, during such management. Updates reflecting USWS approvals are being appended to each burn plan and NYSDEC Region 1 review and approvals for pending burn plans will now once again commence allowing for review of new and approval and implementation of previously approved burn plans.
- The Dwarf Pine Barrens Prescribed Fire Enhancement Zone (633 acres w/11 burn units) has been finalized by the Commission and is being sent to NYSDEC Region 1 to start the final review and approval process. .
- The Otis Pike/Upton Reserve Burn Unit (4252 acres across 23 burn blocks) in Otis Pike Pine Barrens State Forest (NYSDEC) and Upton Reserve (BNL) is in final internal review and will also advance to NYSDEC for final review shortly.
- SEQRA review will be advancing for Dwarf Pine Barrens, Otis Pike and Rocky Point Pine Barrens State Forest.
- *Education and Outreach:*
  - Ms. Weigand continues to serve as a steering committee member in helping coordinate the Northeast Midwest Prescribed Fire Science and Management Conference steering committee that is being held in Albany – August 2024. This is a unique opportunity to showcase the work related to prescribed fire that has been advancing in the region as well as provide critical training to staff. Proposed sessions include Indigenous Fire Stewardship and Fire History; Why do we burn NOW? Contemporary Burning – Fire Ecology, Fire Effects and Where and When; Capacity, Collaboration and Communications, Evaluation of Training needs for Prescribed Fire and Effects, Informing Policy Developments, as well as a half day field trip to the Albany Pine Bush. The workshop is being developed in a storybook framework, with each session intentionally scheduled and delivered to allow for attendees to actively identify and utilize tools and resources to help advance, encourage and support of prescribed fire within their organization/agencies.
  - Ms. Weigand also represented the Commission and Division in participating in and conducting a number of trainings, conferences and meetings to help facilitate appropriate response to Southern Pine Beetle and to help support prescribed fire at the Northeast Forest Fire Compact Annual Meeting, the LI Horticulture Conference, Connecticut Tree Protection Association.
- *Prescribed Fire Preparation and Implementation:*
  - Pile burning has been the focus of prescribed fire operations at the David A. Sarnoff Preserve and Rocky Point Pine Barrens State Forest. Approximately 300 piles were burned by February 19<sup>th</sup> because of 9 pile burning operations over the winter. These piles created by the 2023 Commission Prescribed Fire Crew were all treated with the support of the Commission, Brookhaven National Lab and NYSDEC staff and volunteers and under the leadership of Ranger Gallagher, who coordinated and burn bossed these operations. This support and leadership ensured the treatment of majority of the piles and the online inventory that was created and populated documented the number of piles created and treated to help reduce the heavy fuels and organic matter from the forest floor which in turn helps reduce smoke exposure and mop up during broadcast burn activities

### **Ecological Research Initiatives:**

- Mr. Whittemore has added in new species lists from midwestern grasslands for comparative purposes to help exemplify the unique compositions, level of rarity and conservation value of regional sandplain grasslands under the scientific paper he is drafting titled “Flora and Distribution of Northern Coastal Atlantic Plain Heathland and Grassland.” Mr. Whittemore is first author and Ms. Weigand is second author in collaboration with leading botanists, researchers and land managers in the region. Mr. Whittemore is preparing the paper to be submitted to a scientific journal. This research will go a long way to describe species composition and regionally range of this globally imperiled system.

- The Division is participating in the Long Island Mammal Survey to provide up to date occurrence of mammal species in the region. Currently, six game cameras have been set up in Sears Bellows, Hubbard and Birch Creek County Parks; Rocky Point Pine Barrens State Forest and Red Creek Park (TNC). These cameras have been strategically placed to detect occurrences of less common species. Cameras are maintained and data is reviewed and reported monthly. In the last six weeks there has been a diversity of common mammals including deer, possums, fox and raccoons as well other wildlife including a diversity of bird species. On December 26<sup>th</sup>, a set of three river otters were spotted in Hubbard County Park. River otters are one of the targeted species for the mammal study and the cameras will continue to monitor this area to see if the otters routinely use this site as a latrine.



- Vegetation monitoring has wrapped up for the season after approximately 200 acres were thinned in the David A. Sarnoff Preserve. As planned, the Commission completed twelve vegetation transects throughout the thinning units. Once thinning has been completed, the Commission will revisit the transects and record the changes due to the forest thinning early 2024.



**Southern Pine Beetle**

- Statewide SPB Incident Command System staff, coordinated by NYSDEC’s Forest Health Unit in support by the Division remain active in monitoring SPB outbreaks and dispersion. Surveying is advanced in core and compatible growth areas of the Central Pine Barrens with the help of DEC Forest Health staff. The use of Near map satellite imagery and known locations of infestations from 2022 have focused efforts on marking and recording the expansion of SPB infestations throughout the summer due to no suppression management from the uplisting of the northern long eared bat.
- Surveying for SPB has paused for the season due to winter dormancy and will commence once again in the spring.



## Compliance and Enforcement Division Report January - February 2024 Prepared by CAED Chief Enforcement Officer Frank Carbone

- We received thirty-two complaints this period for dumping, including the boat dumping case which was televised by three news channels. The dumping consisted primarily of furniture, household trash and landscaping debris.
- Seven of these incidents were captured on surveillance cameras. One case was resolved with a total of \$4,400.00 paid in fines in Southampton Town Court.
- We are awaiting the final setup of our Flock surveillance camera and look forward to utilizing it to catch additional violators throughout the Pine Barrens.
- UAS (Unmanned Aircraft Systems) training has continued with most of our pilots passing the obstacle course and we will be completing the practical flight training shortly.

Robert T. Calarco  
*Chairman*

Timothy C. Hubbard  
*Member*

Maria Z. Moore  
*Member*

Daniel J. Panico  
*Member*

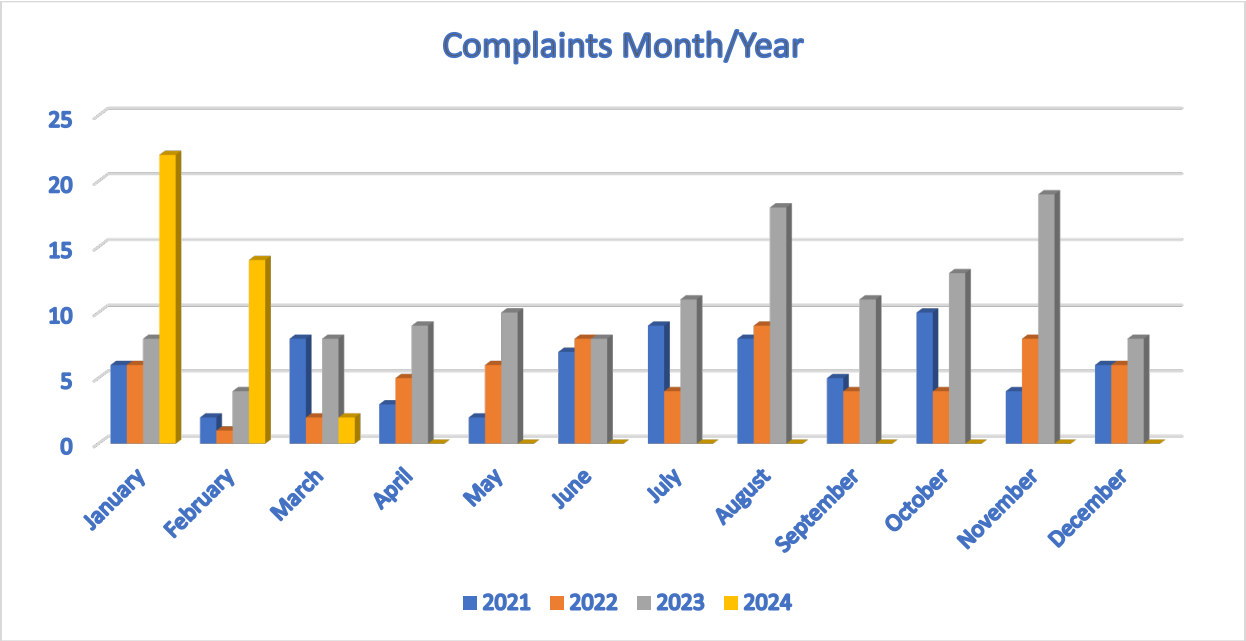
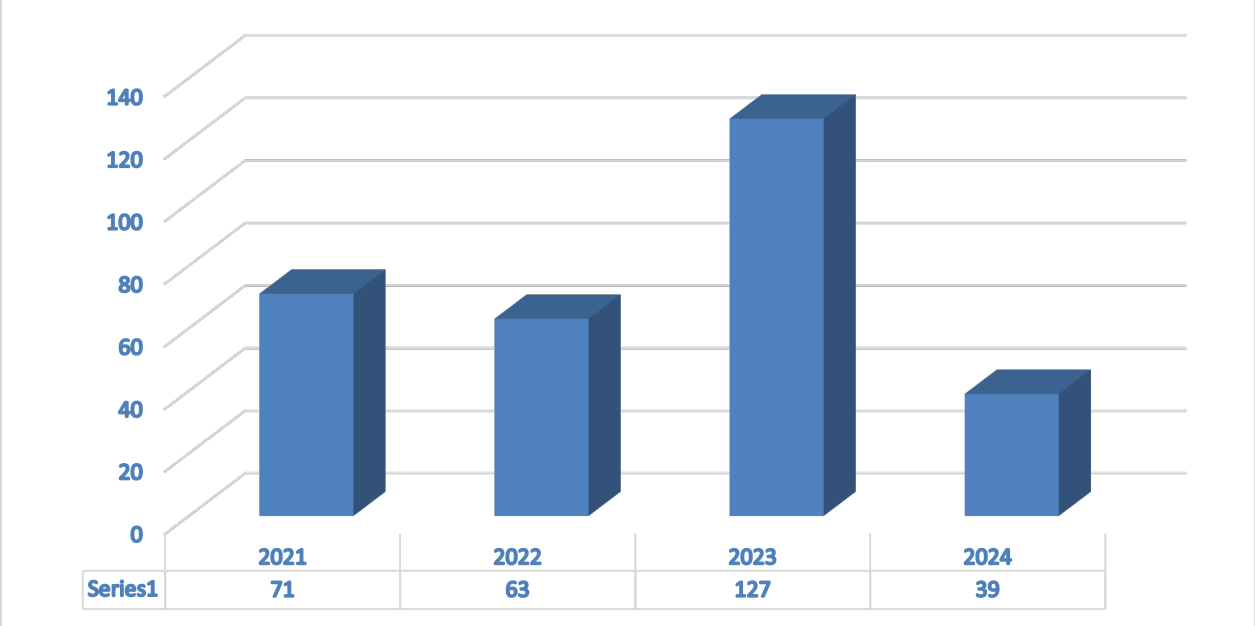
Edward P. Romaine  
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<b>Incident Statistics - Reporting Period 2021 - 2024</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
<b>Intake</b>				
Sent by Agency to Commission	11	14	17	0
Discovered by Commission Staff	48	41	104	38
Called in by Individual to Commission	12	8	6	0
Total Incidents Reported	71	63	127	38
<b>Location of Incident</b>				
Brookhaven	54	46	69	22
Southampton	10	17	50	13
Riverhead	6	0	8	3
Occurring on Public Land	26	21	79	34
Occurring on Private Land	35	22	23	4
Occurring on Public & Private Land	10	20	25	0
Core	35	38	78	31
Compatible Growth Area (CGA)	18	13	39	5
Core & CGA	0	1	1	0
Outside CPBA	18	12	9	2
<b>Nature of Incident*</b>				
Clearing/Encroachment	24	24	20	6
Structures	0	1	2	0
Dumping	35	35	103	32
Mining	1	0	0	0
Hunting	1	0	1	0
ATV	2	1	0	0
Other	8	4	1	0
<i>*Note-some incidents involve more than one land use issue</i>				
<b>Referrals*</b>				
Sent to Town	17	20	6	2
Sent to County	17	12	36	5
Sent to State	16	22	33	1
Commission	21	15	8	1
Sent to AG	0	1	0	0
Other	0	5	37	10
<i>*Note-some incidents are sent to multiple agencies</i>				
<b>Status</b>				
Founded	60	50	125	37
Unfounded	11	13	2	0
Open	39	18	52	12
Closed	32	45	75	26
<b>Inspections</b>				
Conservation Easement Inspections		1	0	3
Development project inspections		2	0	0





**Central Pine Barrens Joint Planning and Policy Commission**

Land Use Division Bi-Monthly Update for the Meeting of Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Action	Central Pine Barrens Location		
Municipality	Brookhaven Town	Riverhead Town	Southampton Town and Quogue Village
<p align="center"><b>Pending Applications, Requests for Determination of Jurisdiction, SEQRA Coordination and other inquiries and activities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Referral: Ross Electric rezoning and development of warehouse facility on 1.16 acres, Middle Island (CGA)</li> <li>Inquiry: 318 Middle Island Yaphank Road, 200-529-1-28.4, sending request for determination for proposed structure (Core)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Venezia Square CGA Development of Regional Significance, Wading River. Development of 37,000 square feet of commercial uses on 6.34 acres. Decision deadline 5/15/24 (CGA)</li> <li>Inquiry: Old River Road, Calverton, 600-146-2-8.2, request for determination to come for residence (Core).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CVE Solar Core Hardship Waiver at Westhampton Property Associates. 50 acre solar facility on 91 acre sand mine and request to modify a conservation easement. Decision deadline 6/26/24</li> <li>Ralph Schenk Core Hardship Application, CR 31, Westhampton. Development of 4,200 square foot warehouse on 1.3 acres. Suspended review due to enforcement incident.</li> <li>Riverside Sewage Treatment Plant CGA Hardship Waiver. Decision deadline 5/2/24.</li> <li>Quogue Village Referrals (CGA):                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-8 Midhampton Ave. 239,000 square feet, 3 buildings, industrial/commercial use on 19 acres</li> <li>-8 Industrial Drive. 18,060 square feet indoor sports facility on 1.6 acres</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Monitoring revegetation and other conditions of decisions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7 Eleven Middle Island (CGA)</li> <li>4 Old Country Road (Core)</li> </ul>	<p align="center">None</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lewis Road Planned Residential Development, East Quogue (CGA, Core) Invasive Species Management Plan in conservation easements.</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Division Activity, Regional Projects and Participation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy and Planning Manager, staff management, budget, voucher and related responsibilities.</li> <li>Review of land use development projects including Core and CGA Hardship waivers, SEQRA Coordination, interagency referrals, information requests, inquiries, requests for determination of jurisdiction and research. Applications include land use development involving commercial and industrial uses, mixed uses and other site plans, residential and non-residential subdivisions, applications for Developments of Regional Significance, Assertions of Jurisdiction, zone changes and other development activities.</li> <li>Monitoring prior hardships and other applications for compliance with conditions</li> <li>Development project land use surveys, inspections, monitoring sites with conditional decisions.</li> <li>Technical support on FOIL requests, compliance and enforcement violations and consent orders on development projects, Credit Program items, communications on land use matters, unauthorized development, clearing, encroachments in protected areas and regulated habitats.</li> <li>Collaborate and coordinate with other Commission divisions.</li> <li>Annual report contributions and participation in planning the annual cooperators meeting.</li> <li>Pine Barrens Interpretive Center research, feasibility study and business plan.</li> <li>Interviews for an environmental planner.</li> </ul>		



***Item 3.c. Pine Barrens Credit Program Report for March 20, 2024:***

Activities in the Credit Program for 2024 included review of applications for Letters of Interpretation, Conservation Easements, Credit Program and FOIL requests management. Some specific work items include:

- Letters of Interpretation: Seven LOIs were issued and three parcels were inspected. Staff is following up on past LOIs for interest in the Program.
- Conservation Easements: Review and Monitoring
  - One easement was recorded, which generated 0.58 credits.
  - Seven easements are currently in progress.
  - 21 easement properties with road access were inspected.



- Pine Barrens Credits
  - Conveyed: 2 Credits have been sold in the Town of Southampton.
  - The average price is \$102,500 per credit.
- Credit Clearinghouse Program Fund Account balance: \$3,403,789.

***Pine Barrens Credit Program Statistics Table: represents figures for the total and annual summary of 2024.***

<b>Easement Protected Lands and Pine Barrens Credits As of March 11, 2024</b>								
	Brookhaven	2024	Riverhead	2024	Southampton	2024	Total	2024
Parcels	527	-	37	-	471	1	1035	1
Acreage	831.69	-	516.78	-	889.51	3.59	2237.98	3.59
Average parcel size	1.58	-	13.97	-	1.89	3.59	2.16	3.59
Credits generated	550.26	-	173.39	-	340.26	0.58	1063.91	0.58
Credits redeemed	423.67	-	145.13	-	189.76	0	758.56	0
Credits not redeemed	126.59	-	28.26	-	150.5	0.58	305.35	0.58
Credits sold		-		-		2		2
Total value of PBC transactions through this date		-		-		\$205,000		\$205,000
Average Credits value		-		-		\$102,500		\$102,500
Credits owned by the Clearinghouse	1.19		-		-		1.19	
# of Inspected CE Parcels	-	-	-	-	-	21	-	21
# of Installed CE Signs	134	-	18	-	92	-	244	0