

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

**February 2025**

**Submitted by Tim Motz, Educational Outreach and Communications Coordinator**

### **Annual Report**

- The 2024 report has been submitted to the printer and should be available for viewing at the February commission meeting. This year's report again features the highlights of the year of our various divisions, information about the Central Pine Barrens and the Commission's mission and function, a letter from Executive Director Jakobsen touting the highlights of the year and the most interesting news coming out of the commission as a whole in 2024. This year, we've also added photos of commission members and information about their designated representatives.

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

- Registration has begun for the 2025 Barrens to Bay Summer Camp at Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge, and sessions are already beginning to fill up. Over the next month, I will be bringing on counselors for paid positions and counselors-in-training for volunteer positions. I will also be registering campers, ordering supplies and working on the program for this summer's six sessions.

### **“A Day in the Life” Program**

- I met last month with my partners in the program from Brookhaven National Laboratory and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to review the 2024 season and make plans for 2025. Among our major initiatives for 2025 will be holding a forum in the spring at which the teachers in the program who have had the most success in utilizing ADITL data in their curricula will teach others how to do so. We'll also be creating a printed pamphlet explaining the program to distribute/hand out in order to recruit new schools to the program.

### **NYWIMA Promotional Video**

- Our 90-second dynamic video promoting the Commission's New York Wildfire and Incident Management Academy is nearly complete and conveys, via rapid-fire imagery, why the academy is the best place for firefighters or emergency workers looking to advance in their fields or for those new to these fields to launch their careers.

### **New Video for Cooperators Meeting**

- **I am also brainstorming on a new video for the commission's annual Cooperators Meeting in June in conjunction with the event's theme, which centers on groundwater and surface waters in the Central Pine Barrens. I will have a much more detailed report on the status of that video at my next commission report in April.**



## Central Pine Barrens Commission Science and Stewardship Program

### Division Report 02/19/2025

#### 2025 Prescribed Fire Staff

Shortly after the New Year began the hiring process for the 2025 prescribed fire staff had begun. The Commission advertised the five job openings that were available for this year's squad, two squad boss positions (Fire Fighter Type 1 (FFT1)) and three support positions (Fire Fighter Type 2 (FFT2)).

We received a total of 17 applicants for the openings.

The applicant pool included three candidates that were returning employees from the 2024 prescribed fire staff. Both Squad Bosses returned and one support firefighter. Leaving only two openings for the FFT2 support roles.

A review of all applicants was performed by both me and Bob Panko, the Commission's Fire Management Specialist, and a selection of 7 applicants were offered interviews. Since the LA wildfires were still active and coincided with our hiring process a few extra applicants were identified in case some had been called to serve on the LA fires.

In coordination with the SCWA's Human Resources staff (Katherine Naccarato) a total of six interviews were scheduled. Applicants interviewed for approximately 40-60 minutes with Katherine, Bob, and me as the interviewers.

Based on our review of their applications and subsequent interview the hiring group unanimously identified two candidates that will be offered a position on the CPBC's 2025 Prescribed Fire Squad. One candidate (Katherine Hooper) is new to wildland fire service but recently served on six different wildfire suppression incidents in 2024. The other is a former Marine (Matthew Elms) with over 12 years of experience on structural fires and is looking to expand his skill set to include wildland fire work. Our last FFT2 squad mate is Justin Mangibin who served on the 2024 prescribed fire staff and is returning to his position in 2025.

All three FFT2s will begin work with the Commission during the first week in March.



Figure 1: Ron Bagan (left) and Nathan LeClair are the CPBC's 2025 Squad Bosses.

The two Squad Bosses (Ron Bagan and Nathan LeClair) returned to the CPBC the first week in February. They are currently performing equipment maintenance, repairs, and all other necessary preparations to get the gear ready for the 2025 prescribed fire season.

To date they have inventoried all equipment for the Type 6 engine, performed preventative maintenance on the Type 7 pumps, prepped ATVs and UTVs, inventoried squad equipment including PPE and Line gear, pre-built FFT2 backpacks, helped to schedule



## Central Pine Barrens Commission Science and Stewardship Program

### Division Report 02/19/2025

CPR/AED training, and established relationships with the Ridge FD to assist in service to the Type 6 engine.

Additional safety and CPBC operational process orientation and trainings have been prepared or are being scheduled to complete the onboarding process for the 2025 prescribed fire staff. This includes safety training for working in areas inhabited by Ticks, identifying signs of illness and/or heat related stress, as well as first aid training for lacerations, abrasions, and other bleeding scenarios. This supplemental training will be conducted during the first week in March.

Further training, including a mandatory annual re-fresher course in wildland fire suppression, as well as a driver safety course for off-road vehicles (ATVs specifically) are also scheduled for early March. Upon completion of all safety and supplemental training, the 2025 prescribed fire staff will be ready to go for the 2025 fire season.

### Conservation Planning

Over the last few months, I have continued my research and completed my initial review of hundreds of Species Status Assessments (SSA) that were recently updated by the NY Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP) as part of the 2025 Statewide Action Plan being developed by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and NYNHP.

This review has identified 377 different species so far ranging across most taxonomic groups that are directly or indirectly associated with the Central Pine Barrens. This includes amphibians, birds, mammals, reptiles, plants and several types of insects such as bees, butterflies, and dragonflies. Currently only limited information has been found to help address freshwater crustaceans and mollusks, as well as a suite of aquatic insects (stoneflies and mayflies). As such research in those two areas is ongoing. Marine species such as whales, dolphins, skates, and rays are currently being excluded from the initial planning efforts as they are often well removed from environmental process within the Central Pine Barrens, however several species of marine fish have been included due to their use of near shore waters including the Peconic and Carmans Rivers.

I am currently going through each species one by one to identify threats to each species, as well as any preliminary conservation actions that were recommended through the SSA process. These three aspects (species, threat, action) will form the basis for the recommendations within the CPBC's conservation plan.

### Other News



Figure 2: PPE and Line gear for the FFT2s is ready for the crewmembers who start in March.



## **Central Pine Barrens Commission Science and Stewardship Program**

### **Division Report 02/19/2025**

On January 6, 2025, Judy, Bob, and I had a conference call with the NYSDEC (Forest Health and Rangers staff) to discuss the upcoming 2025 prescribed fire season. Highlighted topics of conversation included finalizing the burn plans for Otis Pike/Upton Reserve, Dwarf Pines, and Rocky Point East areas; priorities for the upcoming 2025 fire season and discussing the upcoming wildland fire academy (end of February 2025) and the mandatory refresher course (early and mid-March 2025) for active FFT2s and above.

On January 15, 2025, I attended a web conference hosted by the NYSDEC to discuss the upcoming changes to NY's Environmental Conservation Law regarding freshwater wetland regulations in NYS. The new laws will increase legal protections for freshwater wetlands and vernal pools that occur within the CPB (and all of NYS). The major announcement being the change to the size of the wetland that triggers environmental regulation. Prior to these changes freshwater regulations did not apply to wetlands smaller than 14.4 hectares. With the new regulations freshwater wetlands as small as 6.4 hectares would be protected.

The new freshwater wetlands regulations will take effect in 2028.

On January 23, 2025, I (along with Judy and Julie) met with John Turner a well-known local naturalist to discuss multiple conservation issues within the CPB. Highlighted topics included local salamander conservation and key breeding locations, discussing locations for the proposed CPBC nature center, and language and essential tenets of bird friendly building construction.



## Compliance and Enforcement Division Report January - February 2024

### Prepared by CAED Chief Enforcement Officer Alena Lawston

- We received 10 complaints this period for dumping, encroachment and clearing. The dumping was consistent being primarily furniture, household trash and landscaping debris.
- Two of these incidents were referred to our law enforcement partner agencies. One was captured on surveillance cameras and the second involved recovered materials containing identifying information. We have approximately 23 referred cases pending from 2024, the majority of which have solid identifying evidence.
- We will be welcoming a new Enforcement Officer at the end of February. This will help our Division tremendously with patrols and our ability to focus on UAS pilot training.
- Our division is utilizing social media to highlight the importance of citizen stewardship to assist in protecting the Central Pine Barrens. We are providing the 1-877-BARRENS phone number which is staffed on a 24/7 basis by the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office.
- We continue to utilize the Flock surveillance camera and all integrated shared cameras with the outside partner agencies. This type of surveillance enables our division to provide multiple leads to law enforcement for dumping within the Pine Barrens.
- UAS (Unmanned Aircraft Systems) training continues Enforcement Officer Ward and I are both currently preparing to take our UAS Part 107 test utilizing an online testing platform called GLEIM. When time allows, we will begin training on the SYMA training drones in the indoor setting kindly provided to us by the Ridge Fire Department.

Timothy C. Hubbard  
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Maria Z. Moore  
*Member*

Daniel J. Panico  
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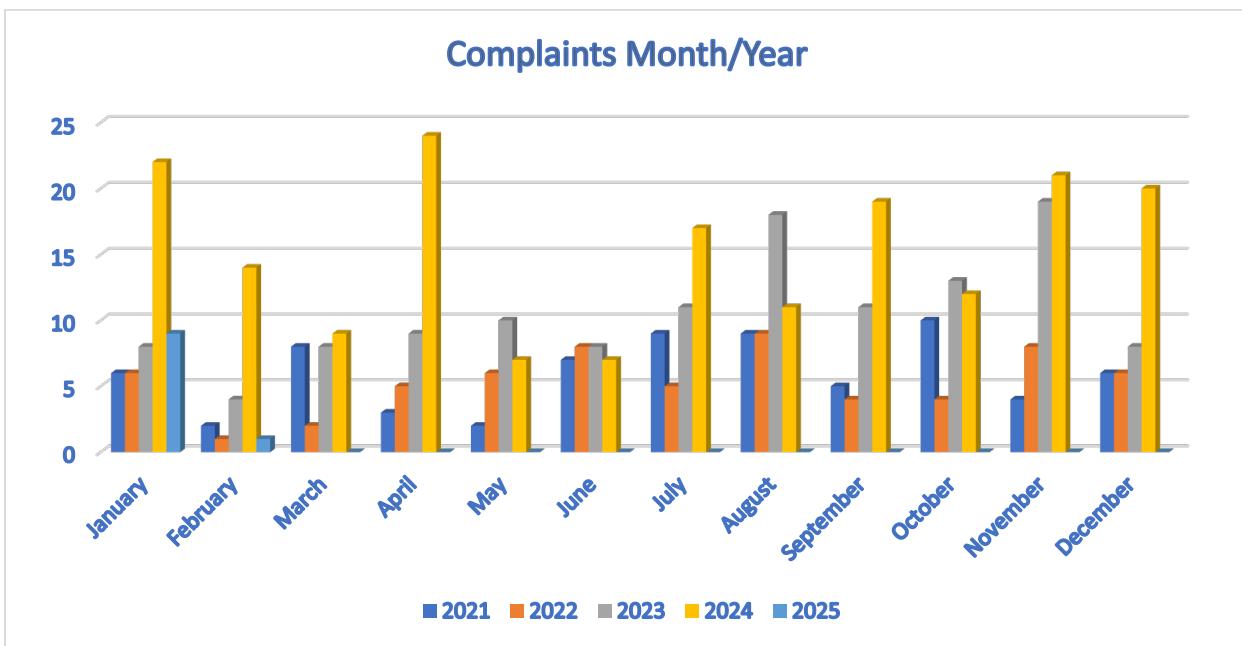
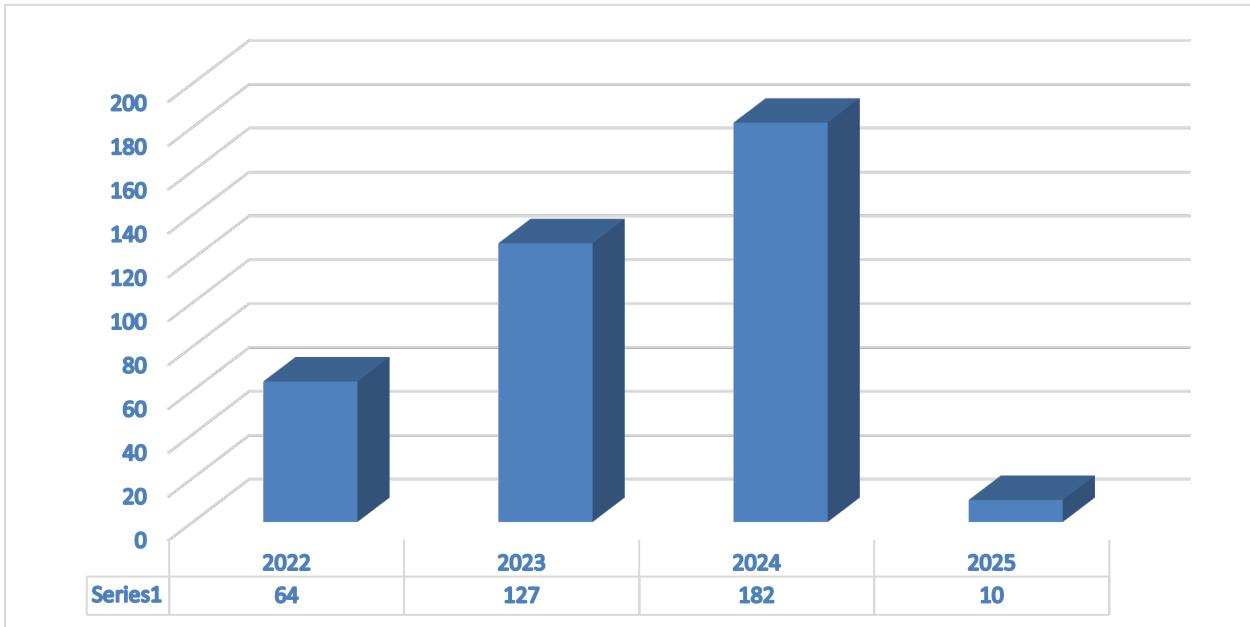
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Incident Statistics - Reporting Period 2021 - 2024				
Year	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>Intake</b>				
Sent by Agency to Commission	14	17	9	2
Discovered by Commission Staff	41	104	163	7
Called in by Individual to Commission	8	6	10	1
Total Incidents Reported	63	127	182	10
<b>Location of Incident</b>				
Brookhaven	46	69	102	1
Southampton	17	50	75	9
Riverhead	0	8	5	0
Occurring on Public Land	21	79	158	10
Occurring on Private Land	22	23	22	0
Occurring on Public & Private Land	20	25	0	0
Core	38	78	140	9
Compatible Growth Area (CGA)	13	39	30	0
Core & CGA	1	1	0	0
Outside CPBA	12	9	10	1
<b>Nature of Incident*</b>				
Clearing/Encroachment	24	20	21	1
Structures	1	2	1	0
Dumping	35	103	153	9
Mining	0	0	1	0
Hunting	0	1	0	0
ATV	1	0	0	0
Other	4	1	2	0
<b>Referrals*</b>				
Sent to Town	20	6	4	0
Sent to County	12	36	31	1
Sent to State	22	33	17	1
Commission	15	8	1	0
Sent to AG	1	0	0	0
Other	5	37	16	0
<b>Status</b>				
Founded	50	125	179	10
Unfounded	13	2	1	0
Open	18	52	51	5
Closed	45	75	131	5
<b>Inspections</b>				
Conservation Easement Inspections	1	0	0	0
Development project inspections	2	0	0	0



**Central Pine Barrens Joint Planning and Policy Commission**  
 Land Use Division Bi-Monthly Update for the Meeting of Wednesday, February 19, 2025

Action	Central Pine Barrens Location		
Municipality	Brookhaven Town	Riverhead Town	Southampton Town
<b>Pending Applications, Requests for Determination of Jurisdiction, SEQRA Coordination, inquiries, proposals and other activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brookhaven Industrial Park Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) Expansion CGA Hardship, Yaphank.</li> <li>Inquiry: Calverton Hills STP project. Core.</li> <li>Inquiry: Manorville subdivision, clearing relief.</li> <li>Referrals: 400 Middle Country Road Zone Change and Site Plan for a garden center; Manorville Fire District; Starbucks Middle Island.</li> </ul>	Venezia Square commercial development project, Wading River, CGA.	Inquiry: Hampton Bays Water District, CGA
<b>Active/Ongoing</b>	---	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Old Country Road / 76 Summit Blvd Consent Order.</li> <li>CVE Solar, compliance with decision, submit legal documents, etc.</li> </ul>	---
<b>Division Activity, Regional Projects and Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental review of land use development projects including Core Preservation Area and Compatible Growth Area Hardship waivers, SEQRA Coordination, interagency referrals, information requests, inquiries, requests for determination of jurisdiction and conformance reviews. Applications include 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>Monitor sites for compliance with decisions and conditions of approval.</li> <li>Site inspections and land use surveys for applications.</li> <li>Technical support on FOIL requests, compliance and enforcement violations, consent orders, Credit Program items, communications on land use matters, unauthorized development and clearing activities and encroachments in protected areas and regulated habitats.</li> <li>Collaborate and coordinate with other Commission divisions.</li> <li>USGS two-year contract to monitor surface and groundwater resources, 2024 to 2026. Researching a study on vernal ponds and coastal plain pond surface water quality monitoring.</li> <li>Website updates on land use and planning matters, natural, scenic, historic and cultural resources.</li> <li>Pine Barrens Nature Center Feasibility Study.</li> </ul>		



**Item 3.c. Pine Barrens Credit Program Report for February 19, 2025:**

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: 44 LOIs were issued and eight parcels were inspected. Staff is following up on past LOIs for interest in the Program.
- Conservation Easements: Review and Monitoring
  - Five easements were recorded, which generated 2.82 credits.
  - Nine easements are currently in progress.
  - 68 easement properties with road access were inspected.



- Pine Barrens Credits
  - Redeemed: 6.39 Credits have been used for commercial, industrial and residential projects in the Towns of Brookhaven and Southampton.
  - Conveyed: 13.3 Credits have been sold in the Towns of Brookhaven, Riverhead and Southampton.
  - The average price is \$107,902 per credit.
- Credit Clearinghouse Program Fund Account balance: \$3,296,992.
- In January, 2025 the Commission sent 380 letters to core land owners soliciting their participation in the Credit Program.

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

Easement Protected Lands and Pine Barrens Credits As of January 1, 2025								
	Brookhaven	2024	Riverhead	2024	Southampton	2024	Total	2024
Parcels	531	4	37	-	471	1	1039	5
Acreage	833.44	1.75	516.78	-	889.51	3.59	2239.73	5.34
Average parcel size	1.57	0.44	13.97	-	1.89	3.59	2.16	1.07
Credits generated	550.26	2.24	173.39	-	340.26	0.58	1063.91	2.82
Credits redeemed	428.77	5.10	145.13	-	191.05	1.29	764.95	6.39
Credits not redeemed	121.49	-2.86	28.26	-	149.21	-0.71	298.96	-3.57
Credits sold		7.57		1.59		4.14		13.3
Total value of PBC transactions		\$903,997		\$100,000		\$431,100		\$1,435,097
Average Credits value		\$119,418		\$62,893		\$104,130		\$107,902
Credits owned by the Clearinghouse	2.19		-		-		2.19	
# of Inspected CE Parcels	-	42	-	4	-	22	-	68
# of Installed CE Signs	139	3	15	-	91	-	245	3