

# **Educational Outreach and Communications Division Update**

**February 2026**

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

## **Barrens to Bay Summer Camp**

- **Registration for the 2026 Barrens to Bay Summer Camp is now underway, and though we are just two weeks into the campaign, we are already close to 50% full. As with last year, session sizes will be bigger than in the past—20 campers on average, whereas in the past we averaged 16. We also have more counselors, both paid and volunteer, to help every camper have a great experience.**

## **“A Day in the Life” Program**

- **Though it’s the quiet part of the year for the “A Day in the Life” program, we are actively recruiting new schools to the program, focusing on the North Shore, with an eye toward having more schools conducting their work within the Central Pine Barrens. I will provide an update on those efforts in the coming months.**

## **Commission Annual Report**

- **The commission’s annual report has been completed, and I will be showing its content at the commission meeting. As in the past few years, this year’s report provides breathtaking Central Pine Barrens imagery along with detailed reports from all divisions as to their important work during the 2025 calendar year. The report also features a letter from our executive director, information about the Central Pine Barrens, and a “News from the Central Pine Barrens” section that focuses on some of the year’s biggest developments, including the completion of a feasibility study on the proposed creation of a Central Pine Barrens Nature Center and the impacts of last March’s brush fires.**

## **Pine Barrens Discovery Day**

- **The division is also in the process of developing a blueprint for a Pine Barrens Discovery Day that will be better than ever before. The event, formerly a mainstay of the commission’s calendar, succumbed to the COVID epidemic. The division is aiming to put it back on the calendar as a free family fun day centered on the Central Pine Barrens in mid-September.**

## **Western Southampton CWPP**

**The division this week met with the consultant hired to work with the commission on the creation of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for western Southampton. The division is working with the consultant to craft an effective plan to reach residents about the importance of the CWPP and to encourage their attendance at an upcoming public meeting at which residents can offer their input about the plan.**



# CENTRAL PINE BARRENS COMMISSION

## Science And Stewardship Program

### Annual Report

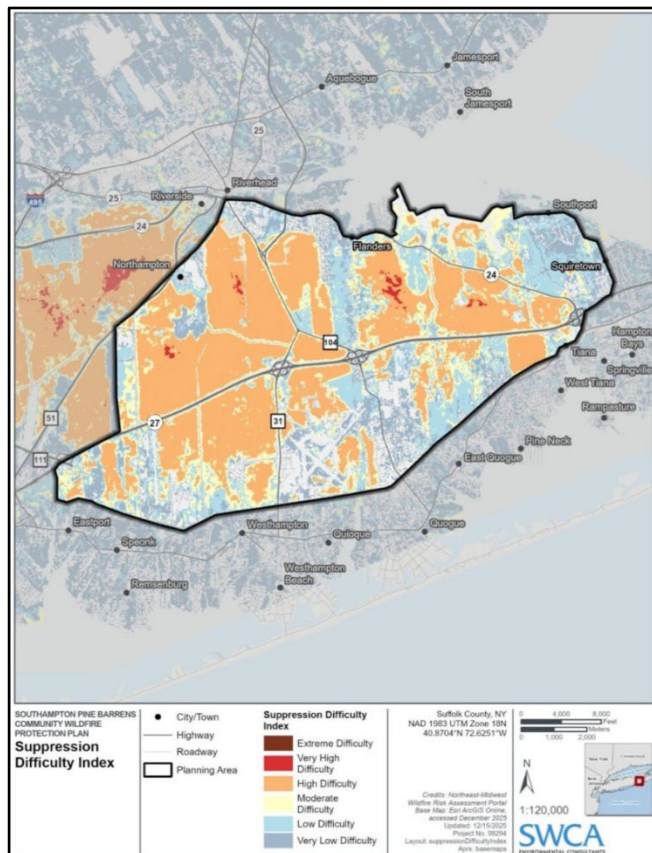
February 18, 2026

### Spring 2026 Prescribed Fire Crew

The hiring process for the 2026 was completed in mid-January. A total of nine (9) applicants were interviewed for six (6) available positions. At the end of January, the SCWA Board approved our selected candidates.

This season we will be hiring one (1) Single Resource Boss (SRB) and five (5) Firefighter Type 2 (FFT2) positions. The SRB position will be held by Richard Palestro a seasoned firefighter with advanced knowledge of wildland firefighting after decades of experience. Mr. Palestro also has direct experience with homeowner wildfire protection strategies, which is a key issue within the Central Pine Barrens. The FFT2s crew have an interesting mix of fire knowledge and direct work experience in both wildland and structural firefighting.

The SRB will start in February to help prepare equipment and gear before the fire season begins while the remaining FFT2s will join the team in March. The spring fire season will close at the end of May.



### Southampton Community Wildfire Protection Plan

The development of the Southampton CWPP continued with several meetings being held between CPBC staff and the SWCA consultant team. Continued refinement of their data needs, early reviews of mapping deliverables, and other examples of the online portal being developed for public access have been the focus of our conversations.

On January 5<sup>th</sup>, the SWCA consultants hosted the first kick-off meeting to engage many of the stakeholders that will be impacted by the CWPP. This meeting included participants from the DEC, Suffolk



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Co. Parks, Suffolk Co. FRES, Gabreski Airport, LIRR, and other local officials.

During a discussion between Commission staff and SWCA consultants in January a survey of fuel types was discussed for the Southampton area. Normally, SWCA would conduct this survey themselves but there appears to be a way the Spring Prescribed Fire Crew could help expand the coverage across the CWPP area. The fuel modeling survey protocols will be discussed in more detail with SWCA once all prescribed fire staff are available.

#### **Remote Sensing Equipment Purchasing**

At the beginning of January, the purchasing process was initiated for all equipment and tools related to S&S's remote sensing program. S&S is working directly with SCWA's procurement office to ensure all purchasing policy requirements are met.

Once all quotes have been received, vendor selection will take place and the equipment ordered.

Training will begin once all equipment is available. Training will be weather dependent, and all training will be completed before official surveys begin.

Permits for conducting remote sensing surveys and data collection are already in-hand from the DEC to begin remote sensing operations in March. If all goes as planned, the remote sensing program should sync up with the beginning of the spring prescribed fire season.

Permits for initial bioacoustic recordings and LiDAR scans have been requested from Suffolk County Parks to access the Dwarf Pine Plains for early testing of the equipment before being deployed in the field. That permitting process is ongoing at the time of this report but should be completed soon.

#### **Conservation Management Action Plan**

After a brief hiatus the drafting of the Commission's conservation plan is back underway. Additional research was done during this period to address some missing information regarding historic presence/absence surveys or other taxonomic identification research that was unknown to S&S. Several conversations were held with local experts and environmental agencies to better understand some of the past efforts, when they were completed, and by whom. This information will help guide several recommendations within CMAP.

It is anticipated that a full draft of the conservation plan will be ready by April of 2026.



## Compliance and Enforcement Division Report January - February 2026 Prepared by CAED Enforcement Officer John Callagy

- We received twelve complaints during this period for dumping and clearing. The dumping was primarily household furniture and construction debris, as well as one boat.
- Six of these complaints were referred to our law enforcement partner agencies and are currently pending. Three of them were captured on surveillance cameras, while the other three contained identifying information found during recovery.
- We continue to utilize the Flock Safety Surveillance cameras and all integrated shared cameras with our law enforcement partner agencies.
- We ended the 2025 year with a total of 290 complaints, referring sixty-four (64) of them to our law enforcement partners, and twenty-two (22) of them to various townships.
- Grand total of dumping fines collected in 2025 came out to \$26,100.

Ryan P. McGarry  
*Chairman*

Jerome Halpin  
*Member*

Maria Z. Moore  
*Member*

Daniel J. Panico  
*Member*

Edward P. Romaine  
*Member*

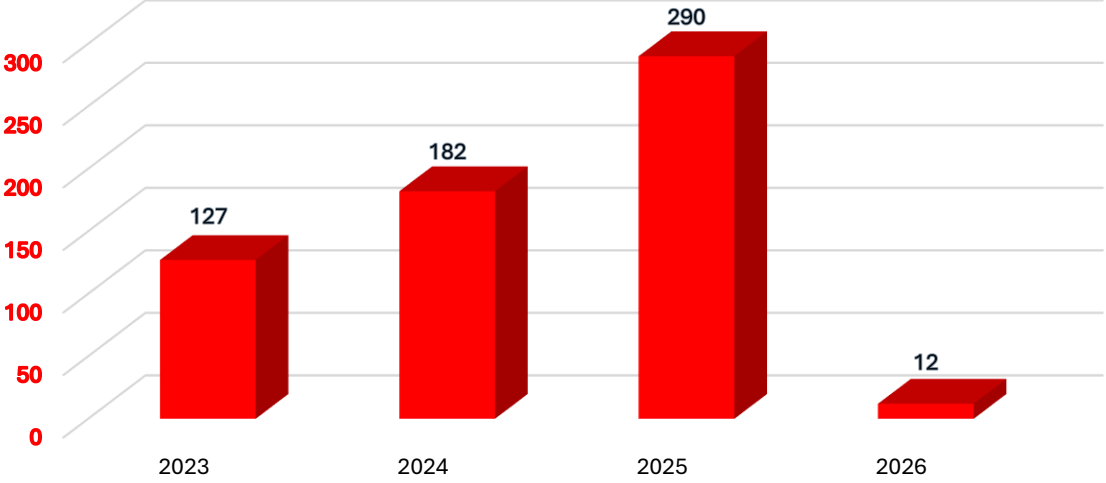


624 Old Riverhead Road  
Westhampton Beach, NY  
11978

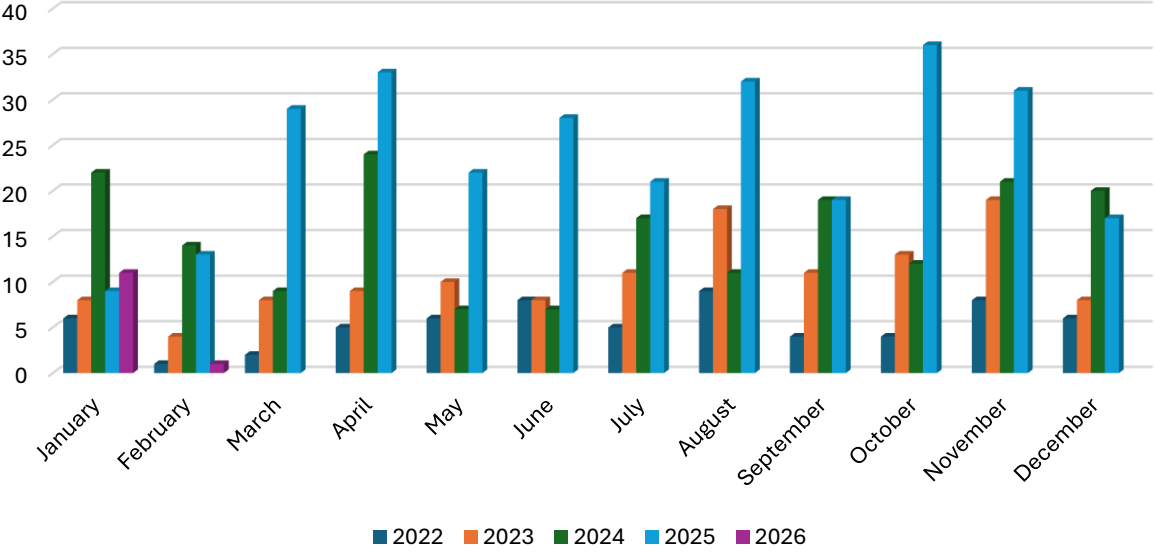
Phone (631) 288-1079  
[www.pb.state.ny.us](http://www.pb.state.ny.us)

<b>Incident Statistics - Reporting Period 2023 - 2026</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>
<b>Intake</b>				
Sent by Agency to Commission	17	9	4	12
Discovered by Commission Staff	104	163	280	
Called in by Individual to Commission	6	10	6	
Total Incidents Reported	127	182	290	12
<b>Location of Incident</b>				
Brookhaven	69	102	187	9
Southampton	50	75	93	3
Riverhead	8	5	10	
Occurring on Public Land	79	158	268	7
Occurring on Private Land	23	22	22	5
Occurring on Public & Private Land	25	0	1	
Core	78	140	213	7
Compatible Growth Area (CGA)	39	30	62	5
Core & CGA	1	0	1	
Outside CPBA	9	10	14	
<b>Nature of Incident*</b>				
Clearing/Encroachment	20	21	32	1
Structures	2	1	0	
Dumping	103	153	254	11
Mining	0	1	0	
Hunting	1	0	0	
ATV	0	0	0	
Other	1	2	4	
<b>Referrals*</b>				
Sent to Town	6	4	22	
Sent to County	36	31	32	4
Sent to State	33	17	18	2
Commission	8	1	0	
Sent to AG	0	0	0	
Other	37	16	14	
<b>Status</b>				
Founded	125	179	288	12
Unfounded	2	1	2	
Open	52	51	77	6
Closed	75	131	213	6
<b>Inspections</b>				
Conservation Easement Inspections	0	0	6	
Development Project Inspections	0	0	5	1

### Complaints by Year as of February 2026



### Complaints Month/Year

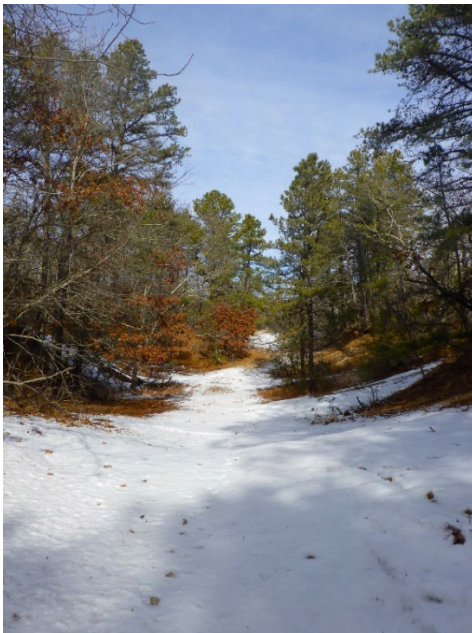




**Item 2.d. Pine Barrens Credit Program Report for February 18, 2026:**

Activities in the Credit Program for 2026 included review of applications for Letters of Interpretation, Conservation Easements, Credit Program and FOIL requests management. Some specific work items include:

- Letters of Interpretation: Staff is following up on past LOIs for interest in the Program.
- Conservation Easements: Review and Monitoring
  - Eight easements are currently in progress.
  - Eight easement properties with road access were inspected.



- Pine Barrens Credits
  - Redeemed: No credit redemption in 2026 yet.
  - Conveyed: 2.2 Credits have been sold in the Town of Brookhaven, Riverhead and Southampton.
  - The average price is \$100,000 per credit.
- Credit Clearinghouse Program Fund Account
  - Balance: \$3,286,312.
  - The Clearinghouse owns 2.29 Credits.

**Pine Barrens Credit Program Statistics Table: represents figures for the total and annual summary of 2026.**

Easement Protected Lands and Pine Barrens Credits As of February 9, 2026								
	Brookhaven	2026	Riverhead	2026	Southampton	2026	Total	2026
Parcels	533	1	37	-	471	-	1041	1
Acreage	835.51	1.84	516.78	-	889.51	-	2241.8	1.84
Average parcel size	1.57	1.84	13.97	-	1.89	-	2.15	1.84
Credits generated	551.73	1.47	173.39	-	340.26	-	1065.38	1.47
Credits redeemed	428.77	-	145.13	-	193.86	-	767.76	-
Credits not redeemed	122.96	-	28.26	-	146.4	-	297.62	-
Credits sold		-		1.90		0.3		2.2
Total value of PBC transactions		-		\$187,000		\$33,000		\$220,000
Average Credits value		-		\$98,421		\$110,000		\$100,000
Credits owned by the Clearinghouse	2.29		-		-		2.29	
# of Inspected CE Parcels		-		-		8	-	8
# of Installed CE Signs	141	-	15	-	91	-	247	-

**Central Pine Barrens Joint Planning and Policy Commission**  
 Land Use Division Bi-Monthly Update for the Meeting of Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Action	Central Pine Barrens Location		
Municipality	Brookhaven Town	Riverhead Town	Southampton Town
<b>Pending Applications, Requests for Determination of Jurisdiction, SEQRA Coordination, inquiries, proposals, items and other activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Town Referral:</b> Elite Towers at Country Farms, 150 foot tall monopole on horse farm, 200 Bellport Avenue, Medford, CGA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Core Hardship:</b> 645 Grumman Boulevard, Calverton, reuse industrial facility for indoor cannabis growing operation on 20 acres, Core. Decision deadline 6/1/26.</li> <li>• <b>Town Referral:</b> Draft Scope for DEIS Duffy Motocross on 15 acres, River Road, Calverton, CGA.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Core Hardship:</b> Gazza, Old Riverhead Road, Westhampton, modify vegetation to reduce wildfire risk, Core. Decision deadline 2/18/26.</li> <li>• <b>Core Hardship:</b> Hampton Hills Golf Course restroom, Westhampton, Core. Decision deadline 6/3/26.</li> <li>• <b>Core Hardship:</b> Hampton West Park, Westhampton, restroom, parking lot and sports courts, Core. Decision deadline 6/2/26.</li> <li>• <b>Town Referral:</b> Northwell Health Residential Subdivision, Old Country Road, Eastport, 46 lots on 44 acres.</li> <li>• <b>Hampton Bays STP,</b> 550,000 gallon community scale STP on 32 acres, CGA, CRA.</li> <li>• <b>NYSDEC Referral:</b> East Quogue Farms irrigation well on 12 acres.</li> </ul>
<b>Division Activity, Regional Projects and Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and analysis of land use development project applications for Core Preservation Area and Compatible Growth Area Hardship waivers, SEQRA Coordination, interagency referrals, information requests, property inquiries, requests for determination of jurisdiction and conformance reviews. Development applications involve residential and commercial, industrial and mixed uses, zone changes, site plans, subdivisions, Developments of Regional Significance, Assertions of Jurisdiction, Critical Resource Areas 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 activities with Commission divisions and interagency partners.</li> <li>• Preparation of application materials for monthly Commission meetings.</li> <li>• USGS two-year water resources study continues, 2024-2026, groundwater sampling and monitoring in Peconic River and Carmans River.</li> <li>• Commission website management and updates.</li> </ul>		

