

## Central Pine Barrens Wildfire Task Force

Theodore Kern, Chair  
Captain Tim Byrnes and Baycan Fidelis, Co-vice Chairs



### Wildfire Task Force Meeting Wednesday, March 29, 2023 at 7:00 pm Ridge Fire House

Ted Kern called the meeting to order at 1915 and led attendee introductions and the pledge of allegiance.

Captain Tim Byrnes conducted attendance; a quorum was achieved.

Robert Calarco  
*Chair*

Steven Bellone  
*Member*

Edward P. Romaine  
*Member*

Jay H. Schneiderman  
*Member*

Yvette Aguirre  
*Member*

#### **Administrative**

#### **Member attendance**

Jack Blaum from Suffolk FRES, Joseph Kuethen from Suffolk FRES; Ed Schneyer from Southampton Fire Chiefs; Captain Timothy Byrnes from NYS DEC Forest Protection; Ted Kern from Ridge Fire Department; Bill Kelly from Riverhead Fire Department; Virginia Massey from Eastport Fire Department; Joe Pollina from the National Weather Service; Dan Brooks from Ridge Fire Department; Brian Brooks from Ridge Fire Department; Annji Bagozzi from the US Fish and Wildlife Service; Judy Jakobsen, Brent Wolffinden, Polly Weigand and Catherine Drew from Central Pine Barrens.

Minutes for the last meeting will be distributed at the next meeting.

Ted Kern would like to have more department participation and would like to offer this meeting at different locations. He hopes that the next meeting June 28<sup>th</sup> will be held at a more eastern location. The following meeting will be in September.

Mr. Kern is concerned with the light attendance at the meetings and participation of all agencies is necessary especially going into Wildfire season.

#### **Spring and Summer Weather Outlook– Joe Pollina, National Weather Service**

Joe Pollina from the National Weather Service reported that this Spring into Summer there is a 40-50% chance of above normal temperatures and precipitation will be normal to above normal. Mr. Pollina requested the help of those at the meeting in regard to reporting weather conditions, especially on the twin forks. This information is especially needed in the overnight hours. Weather observers can report their results to [weather.gov/nyc/fireweather](http://weather.gov/nyc/fireweather). He also requested assistance in reporting rain, hail and snow on the east end. This can be done by utilizing the following link  
<https://www.cocorahs.org/application.aspx>

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Fax (631) 288-1367  
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## **Active Prescribed Fire Program - Polly Weigand, Central Pine Barrens Commission**

Polly Weigand from the Central Pine Barrens discussed the Active Prescribed Fire Program in coordination with the DEC. She gave a summary and goals of the program including, increase public and firefighter safety, reduce wildfire risk, and improve forest health. Ms. Weigand also illustrated which areas have planned prescribed burns and which have proposed burns. This prescribed burn program is a collaborative effort among the DEC, local fire departments, Town Emergency Services, Brookhaven National Lab, US Forest Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service in addition to other agencies.

In 2022, 25 prescribed fire operations were completed, 8 of which were led by the CPBC Burn Boss. Other burns including ones in the grasslands were led by the forest rangers. 372 acres were restored and treated.

The prescribed burn seasons run from March 1 to May 31 and from August 1 to October 31. June and July are restricted because of the Northern Long Eared Bat.

Ms. Weigand explained the different methods of communication and notifications to the fire departments and emergency services as well as the homeowners and residents in the area.

Information can be accessed from these locations.

- Commission Website - Prescribed Fire Page
- Videos: YouTube Channel – Prescribed Fire Video & Recorded Presentations
- Constant Contact Mailing List
- Social Media - Facebook #CPBCFIRE
- Press and Media Coverage
- Meetings & Collaborations
  - Fire Department Operational Meetings
  - Civic Association and Library Presentations
  - National Night Out
- Operational Notifications
  - Mailing Post Card (Beginning of Season)
  - Infographic Notifications Social Media/CC (Day Before):
  - Day of:
    - Reverse 911 Calls
    - Fire Department and Emergency Service

Members of the fire departments and districts are an important component of a successful burn season. Assistance is needed with notifications and help notify the proper contacts in the districts. Please update the Education and Outreach constant contact list for each department.

Other forms of support and outreach from Departments can be through

- Notification and Meeting Coordination Contact
- Education and Outreach Contact
- Publish Notifications – Emails, Digital Boards, Social Media, Newsletters.
- Join us at Civic Association and other meetings.
- Join us for Meetings & Collaborations • Fire District/Department Operational Meetings • Civic Association and Library Presentations • National Night Out • Other Fire Department Events/Meetings etc. • Assist w/ water deliveries and on burns.

### **Southern Pine Battle**

The infestation of the Southern Pine Beetle has overwhelmed trees in areas of the Pine Barrens. Warmer temperatures this winter and drought conditions last year, this allowed the Southern Pine Beetle to move and thrive. Hard hit areas include corridors, roads, powerlines and edges of homes. Southern Pine Beetles cannot be eradicated, only managed, and suppressed. This is primarily done by thinning the forest.

The Beetle can spread and kill a tree in as little as 4 weeks. Southern Pine Beetle damage can be recognized by the trees turning yellow and red. Suppression and flagging are ways Ms. Weigand identified to manage the damage. Hazard trees (infested trees) need to be removed or cut down. This should be done while the trees are still green and yellow.

Ms. Weigand related the Southern Pine Beetle to the fire departments response to wildfire. She stressed the importance of knowing where the impacted trees are, and to not directly attack the fire if it is in an infested area. Her advice was to let the fire come to you, and not go into the area. She emphasized the importance of safety and not send a crew into an infested area, as the trees are at risk of falling.

### **NYSDEC Tail Marker Program – Captain Tim Byrnes, NYS DEC**

Captain Tim Byrnes discussed the marker system used in the Rocky Point Natural Resource Management area. This identifier is coded to a map that Rocky Point Fire Department has and can be utilized as a locator system for emergency services. If any department is interested in developing this system for public lands in their district, reach out to Rocky Point for more information. Wherever these markers are place would help locate distressed individuals in that area. Trainings in their department were done with these tags and it has been an effective tool. Mapping for this program is typically done by individual departments and helps those involved to be more comfortable with their territories.

### **Fire Management Plan – Judy Jakobsen, Central Pine Barrens Commission**

Judy Jakobsen reported on the Fire Management Plan. The original Fire Management Plan was created in 1999. Updates were made in 2020, and Ms. Jakobsen would like updates made again and have the plan completed. Ted Kern would like the Plan completed by the end of the year. He also asked if anyone is interested in working on the Plan Committee, please reach out to Ted Kern or Judy Jakobsen.

### **Fire Weather Rating– Judy Jakobsen, Central Pine Barrens Commission**

Judy reported that the fire danger rating comes out of the Pine Barrens Office and if any person is interested in receiving the updates for the Fire Danger Rating please see her to be put on the list. The rating can also be viewed on the Pine Barrens website <https://pb.state.ny.us/>.

### **New York Wildfire and Incident Management Academy - Tim Byrnes, NYWIMA Board Chair**

Tim Byrnes reported there was a NYWIMA Board Meeting in March and plans are being made for a Fall Academy. The dates are scheduled for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> weeks of October. Kathy Malangone, the Academy Coordinator, is planning to return to coordinate the trainings. The NYWIMA Board discussed which courses will be scheduled and is still defining the list. Tim Byrnes encouraged all fire departments to participate in the Academy. A brochure will go out in July with the scheduled trainings. Tim Byrnes asked that if anyone knows of a large facility that the Academy can access for the fall training please reach out to him or Judy

### **Community Wildfire Prevention Sub-Committee, Judy Jakobsen**

Judy Jakobsen reported that starting in 2016 they have been going out to local communities and visiting the properties, at the homeowner request, to assess the property and vegetation and make recommendations on how to make the home more defensible in the occurrence of a wildfire. Ms.

Jakobsen has pamphlets available with this information. It is also available on the website, <https://pb.state.ny.us/>.

She encouraged the fire departments to participate in the Ready, Set, Go program as well as take advantage of the free information available through the QR code on the back of the brochure.

### **New Business**

Ed Schneyer reported that Dick Fox, from the Flanders Fire Department, passed away recently. He was a longtime supporter and participant of the Wildfire Task Force and the Wildfire Academy.

### **Next Meeting**

Next Meeting is June 28<sup>th</sup> and is looking for a host for that meeting.

Ted Kern made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ed Schneyer seconded the motion.

# Central Pine Barrens Wildfire Task Force

Theodore Kern, Chair  
Captain Tim Byrnes and Baycan Fidelis, Co-vice Chairs



## Wildfire Task Force Meeting Wednesday, June 29, 2023 at 7:00 pm Riverhead Fire House

Ted Kern called the meeting to order at 1910 and led attendee introductions and the pledge of allegiance.

Captain Tim Byrnes conducted attendance; a quorum was achieved.

Minutes from March 29, 2023. Motion to approve the minutes by Jim Hay, second by Ed Schneyer

Robert Calarco  
*Chair*

Steven Bellone  
*Member*

Edward P. Romaine  
*Member*

Jay H. Schneiderman  
*Member*

Yvette Aguair  
*Member*

### Administrative

### Member attendance

Jack Blaum from Suffolk FRES, Joseph Kuethen from Suffolk FRES; Ed Schneyer from Southampton Fire Chiefs; Captain Timothy Byrnes from NYS DEC Forest Protection; Ted Kern from Ridge Fire Department; Baycan Fideli from Riverhead Fire Department; Jeff Bailes from Ridge Fire Department; Moonee Rivers from Gordon Heights Fire Department; Nick Spata from Town of Brookhaven Fire Marshals; Jim Hay from Miller Place Fire Department; John Wernet from NYSDEC; Ben Hubbard from Quogue Fire Department; Randy Hintz from Wading River Fire Department; Nick Gibbons from SC Parks; Chris Steel from Manorville Fire Department; Kevin Leedham from Ridge Fire Department; Brian Williams from Flanders Fire Department and Judy Jakobsen, Frank Carbone and Catherine Drew from Central Pine Barrens.

Jack Blaum from Suffolk FRES discussed a recent Brush truck training that took place in East Hampton. Departments from the South Fork participated in a one-day classroom session and then utilized the East Hampton Airport for training. Additional trainings were coordinated with fire departments in East Quogue, Ridge, Manorville, Melville, North Babylon and S. Farmingdale. He discussed the down pine trees that are in the woods and the danger they present in an emergency. He also discussed the air tag system and how it can be helpful in the event of a wildfire. Airtags can be tracked at the command post to see where the apparatus is. There is a public safety channel available on the 800. It is on and open for use by all departments. Mr. Blaum can provide a list of all the channels to the fire departments. He also emphasized the importance of having all equipment labeled from above/on top for helicopters to identify.

Jeff Bailes, NYS Safety Officer, mentioned the importance of having a safety officer to assist incident command. Incident Command is responsible for the safety of those responding, having a safety officer assist is crucial for the well-being and safety of the fire fighters. He stated that there are different classes that you can take to become one. His organization can offer the class to departments individually and prepare each department for the National Safety Officer Exam. To be eligible for the course, permission from the chief must be given, completed at least 5 years of experience in emergency service, be NFPA 1521 certified, and have completed 6 random JPR skills. The cost is \$325 to take.

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Ted Kern encouraged all present departments to encourage their counterparts to come to the next meeting. The next meeting is Sept 27<sup>th</sup> and hopefully will be on the West End.

## **Presentations**

**Unmanned Aircraft System Training (Frank Carbone, Central Pine Barrens).** Mr. Carbone discussed the training needed to operate a drone for a fire department or for anything other than personal use. The 107 class will give operators the certification they need to fly a drone for non-personal use. A 2 day course is offered to prepare you (with additional study time) for the test. Another certification is the COA (Certificate of Authorization). The COA is a self-certification and not recommended because of liability. Mr. Carbone discussed the difference between the two certifications.

Typical uses for drones are a flying camera, delivery system, or mapping but can also be used for disaster response and situational awareness in emergencies. Any aircraft over .55 pounds needs to be registered. To be eligible to obtain a license, operators must be at least 16 years old, read, speak and write English and be in good physical condition. The cost is \$175 to take the test. Operators must recertify every 2 years, by taking a recertification test.

Mr. Carbone explained different types of drones and the costs involved in having a drone. His presentation gave insight into the challenges of operating a drone and the advantages of its use. Any department that would like to see his PowerPoint presentation can obtain one by contacting the Central Pine Barrens.

**What Homeowners Can Do to Better Protect Their Home from Wildfire- (Judy Jakobsen, Central Pine Barrens)** Ms. Jakobsen discussed the Firewise Program, a set of rules that the guide homeowners to better protect their homes in the occurrence of a wildfire. Ms. Jakobsen stated that The Commission will go out and work with communities and the homeowner to assess the property and make suggestions on what to do to prevent the fire. They will assess the structure in terms of where it is vulnerable. The information provided suggests that the roof is most vulnerable. Vents should have metal screening behind it so embers don't fly in. Clean leaves from gutters and any leaves near home should be removed. Windows should be double pane, and large windows should not have flammable vegetation underneath. Anything attached to the house is considered part of the house and can therefore spread fire. Separate the fence from the house. A 0-30 foot zone helps the home survive from wildfire exposure. A brochure is available to explain how to manage vegetation in all zones of the house. Create a path system that would prevent fire leading up to your house. 3-5 feet around house would have stone or material that is noncombustible. Replace vegetation with non-flammable vegetation. The information given at this presentation is available by contacting the Pine Barrens. Ms. Jakobsen encouraged all fire departments to join the Ready, Set, Go Program. They can create customized information for each department that can be distributed to homeowners and help inform them in the event of a wildfire. Ted Kern also pointed out that National Night Out is Tuesday, August 1<sup>st</sup> at Fireman's Park at 5PM. This information would be helpful at this event.

**NYWIMA Update (Captain Tim Byrnes)** Captain Byrnes stated that the fire academy will be held from October 19-29 at Brookhaven National Laboratory. A final schedule will be released soon. Captain Byrnes encouraged all fire departments to get new members to sign up for the classes. He indicated that the S-130 and S-190 will be offered at no cost to volunteers from Suffolk and Nassau Counties.

ICS courses will be offered as well. These classes will be done consecutively. He stated that

FEMA's requirements have changed and those classes will need to be taken again.

**Fire Weather (Judy Jakobsen, Central Pine Barrens)** Ms. Jakobsen encouraged everyone to sign up for the daily fire weather rating.

**Prescribed Fire (Captain Tim Byrnes)** Captain Byrnes reported that it was an active season in collaboration with the Central Pine Barrens. Twenty prescribed fires, encompassing 42 acres of grasslands and woodlands were burned. He advised that because of the long-eared bat's endangered status, no burns will take place over the summer and will resume in the fall. Captain Byrnes also discussed the brush fire statistics from Suffolk County FRES. Seven brush fires occurred spanning 25 acres. He said most were incendiary in nature and could not distinguish the nature of the fire. These fires occurred mostly on state and county land. He did elaborate that one 13-acre fire took almost a week to extinguish.

Ted Kern reported that the Central Pine Barrens Fire Management Plan is being reviewed and hopefully will be updated by the end of the year.

The Next meeting will be September 27<sup>th</sup> on the west end. Ted Kern asked that if anyone has any ideas for presentations, please reach out to him.

#### **Next Meeting**

Next Meeting is September 27<sup>th</sup> and is looking for a host for that meeting.

Ted Kern made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jim Hay seconded the motion.



## Central Pine Barrens Wildfire Task Force

Theodore Kern, Chair

Captain Tim Byrnes and Baycan Fidelis, Co-vice Chairs



### Wildfire Task Force Meeting Wednesday, November 30, 2023 at 7:00 pm Middle Island Fire House

Ted Kern called the meeting to order at 1910 and led attendee introductions and the pledge of allegiance.

Robert Calarco  
*Chair*

Captain Tim Byrnes conducted attendance; a quorum was achieved. Minutes from June 28, 2023. Motion to approve the minutes by Ed Schneyer, second by Brian Smith.

Steven Bellone  
*Member*

Edward P. Romaine  
*Member*

#### **Administrative**

Jay H. Schneiderman  
*Member*

#### **Member attendance**

Yvette Aguair  
*Member*

John Wernet from NYSDEC, Jim Hay from Miller Place Fire Department, Virginia Massey from Eastport Fire Department, Ed Schneyer from Southampton Fire Chiefs, Joseph Kuethen from Suffolk FRES, Ted Kern from Ridge Fire Department; Baycan Fideli from Riverhead Fire Department; James Cullen from Suffolk County Police Department, Jim Oresto from Suffolk County Police Department; Steve Darling from Suffolk County Police Department, Brian Smith from Brookhaven Town, Rodney Trafford from Hampton Bays Fire Department, Mike Draws from PSEGLI, and Nicholas Gibbons from Suffolk County Parks

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Ted Kern started the meeting with a safety message. He pointed out the 3 point of contact method is always a good rule. 3 of the 4 extremities should always be in contact with something. Also be aware of any ice or slippery conditions when getting in and out of vehicles and use handrails.

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#### **Presentations**

##### **PSEG LI Vegetation Management (Ted Kern, PSEGLI)**

Ted Kern discussed the role of utilities in wildfires and the differences in the landscape of Long Island and Maui. He described the conditions in the Maui fires. The island was in a drought and a hurricane was south of the island caused high winds around 67 mph at peak times. The resources on the island of Maui are much different than those of Long Island. Long Island has the opportunity to access out of state resources,

where Maui is remote and cannot get more resources until winds die down. There is no main thoroughfare that runs through Maui. Getting around Maui is very difficult, as the center part of the island is mountains. Vegetation in the two areas are different – more grasslands in Maui as Long Island contains more trees. Urban Interface between Long Island and Maui are similar, but building construction is different. In Maui, the roofing is comprised of grasses and other flammable materials- they are different than those in our area.

Complications of this fire included high winds, low pressure in the water mains, and limited manpower. Sirens were not used; they had only been used for tsunamis in the past. Communications and electric were down during the fire as well. Fire-flying aircrafts were unavailable with the winds, limited evacuation routes, also grasslands are not being maintained, which fueled the fire. Changes now that are being discussed are using sirens for orders of an evacuation. Mr. Kern addressed what is done differently on Long Island when there are emergencies.

Mike Draws oversees the transmission system for PSEG. He discussed what PSEG does to prevent feeding wildfire, storm response and increase reliability of the system. PSEG has invested a large amount of money removing the pine trees effected by the southern pine beetle. They have targeted areas in Bridgehampton, Brookhaven Laboratory, Deerfield and Bellows Pond State Park. The cut trees are chipped up to minimize the hazards for fireman looking to put out fire. Other preventative measures that PSEG has instituted include breakers on the substations, and steel poles across intersections to prevent wires from hitting the ground. PSEG implemented viper switches that strengthens the system but is safer for fireman and service workers. The purpose of his work is to protect the wires and prevent fires. Additionally, he discussed the safety measures that should be observed when coming into contact with a live wire. A fire chief should contact the county immediately in the event of a live wire. A limit of 30 feet should be observed when this is encountered. Mr. Draws discussed the dangers of a substation fire. He stressed to never cut a lock on a substation fence. He emphasized waiting for the power to be cut. PSEG is committed to increasing focus on public safety with a focus on wildfire and identifying which areas are low, medium and high risk.

In the case of a wildfire, here are some steps that should be taken:

- Notify PSEG immediately
- Utilize a safety officer early
- Report damaged equipment
- Do not enter substation

## **Program Updates**

**NYWIMA Update (Catherine Drew)** Catherine Drew stated that the fire academy was held from October 19-29 at Brookhaven National Laboratory. During this period, a total of 216 Students participated in 13 classes. They represented 17 states and 80 different agencies at the local, state and federal levels. In addition, the Academy was able to train firefighters from Canada as well. At a local level, the Academy offered free training to Nassau and Suffolk

Volunteer Firefighters in Wildland Firefighter Training. Volunteers from 10 local Fire Departments took advantage of the classes offered. She

**Fire Weather (Judy Jakobsen, Central Pine Barrens)** Ms. Jakobsen encouraged everyone to sign up for the daily fire weather rating. Fire Updates have ended for this year. This year they did not reach a high fire danger weather rating.

Ted Kern notified the Task Force that Randy Hintz from Wading River had passed away.

**Next Meeting**

Next Meeting is March 27<sup>th</sup> and is looking for a host for that meeting.

Ted Kern made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ed Schneyer seconded the motion.