Spring into the Pinelands at the Franklin Parker Preserve

by Russell Juelg, Senior Land Steward, The New Jersey Conservation Foundation

The Franklin Parker Preserve is named in honor of Franklin E. Parker III, who was instrumental in the passage of the 1979 Pinelands Protection Act, and the first chair of the New Jersey Pinelands Commission. The New Jersey Conservation Foundation acquired the 9400-acre property from the DeMarco family on December 31, 2003. Since that time, several more parcels have been added and the Preserve now spans 9,770 acres. It has been open to the public for recreation since its purchase.

Wildlife viewing, birding, botanical studies, photography, hiking, and fishing have probably been the most popular public uses of the land. There is also bicycling, horseback riding, canoeing, and kayaking. Situated in the heart of the Pine Barrens, it’s an excellent place to enjoy, explore, and study this globally significant ecosystem.

The property consists of Pine/Oak uplands, Atlantic White Cedar Swamps, mixed hardwood swamps, Pitch Pine Lowlands, reservoirs, streams, and the upper portion of the West Branch of the Wading River, beginning with the headwaters above Chatsworth Lake.

About 1000 acres were in commercial cranberry production, and these bogs have been converted to natural wetlands. This restoration, engineered in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Ducks Unlimited, demonstrates the amazing resiliency of Pine Barrens to certain kinds of human impacts. Since the cranberry is a native plant and its culture doesn’t require changing the water or soil chemistry, the full array of native Pine Barrens plants and animals have now re-colonized land that was used for decades for intensive commercial agriculture.

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Celebrate Spring at PPA’s Annual Native Plant Sale on April 26th

by Rebecca Free, Director of Membership and Communications

This has been quite a winter! Snowstorm after snowstorm made it hard to get to work or to get anywhere for that matter. In the beginning it was fun, since last winter was so mild. But as the winter wore on I found myself longing for the warm sweet air of spring, especially when March came in like a lion and went out like one too!

According to an article in the Press of Atlantic City, road crews in New Jersey have put down almost a half million tons of salt on New Jersey’s roads, almost twice the amount applied last year. Although we tend to think of salt as a natural substance, introducing such large quantities of it into our environment raises ecological concerns. There are no studies on the impact of road salt specific to the Pinelands but studies in the North-eastern USA have shown that increased salt levels in aquatic ecosystems can disrupt the way animals regulate the amount of water in their bodies. Frogs, salamanders and fish can essentially dehydrate, even though they are submerged. Plant communities can also change as more salt-tolerant invasive species like Phragmites can come in.

If your plants have been damaged by road salt, snow plows or the winter weather, I hope you will come to PPA’s 9th Annual Native Plant Sale and look for some replacements.

A great way to help preserve our native flora – and our environment in general – is to plant native vegetation around our homes and businesses. Luckily, New Jersey residents have lots of beautiful and interesting native plants available to them through local nurseries. When you landscape with natives, not only are you likely to save money and resources by using less fertilizer, soil additives, and water, you are also helping to strengthen the complex web of connections linking native species and ecological processes in your local ecosystem.

Every April, the Pinelands Preservation Alliance holds a Native Plant Sale at our offices in Southampton.

This year our plant sale will be held April 26, from 11:00 am - 3:00 pm. If you are a PPA member, you can attend the members-only plant sale on Friday, April 25, from 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm. We’ll have lots of plants to choose from, including natives of the Pinelands and of New Jersey in general – from Asters and Bearberry to Vervain and Winterberry. PPA staff will be on hand to provide you with information about choosing the right natives for your home.

Stay Informed!

Here are two quick ways to stay informed about Pinelands events and issues:

Email ppa@pinelandsalliance.org with the subject “Add my Email” to get our weekly emails.

“Like” us on Facebook for daily updates at facebook.com/pinelands
After a decade of fighting to restore the natural fire regime to the Pinelands, the Prescribed Burn Act passed the legislature unanimously with bi-partisan sponsorship in early January of this year. PPA thanks the sponsors of this important bill: Senator James Beach, Senator Robert Singer, Assemblyman Ron Dancer and Assemblyman Herb Conaway. Unfortunately, with only a few days left in the legislative session and Governor Christie’s preoccupation with other matters, the bill was not signed and therefore was “pocket vetoed”. Although this is discouraging, there is still hope that the bill can move forward this year.

The Prescribed Burn Act was crafted in 2003 by PPA, farmers, private land owners, and other environmental groups and modeled after acts passed by other states. The bill requires the state to create a standard system or adopt the federal system for certifying prescribed burn managers, clarifies the liability rules for those doing prescribed burns, and gives the NJ Forest Fire Service new powers to protect against dangerous wildfires.

The bill also allows the state to burn in-holdings when necessary to reduce the risk to public and private land. Many of our state forests contain private land in-holdings where there is an absentee land owner. The bill prescribes a process for contacting that landowner and giving sufficient time for a response. Absent a response, the state can take measures to reduce the liability to the region by conducting a burn or mechanically replicating a burn.

The bill’s provisions also clarify the standard of liability for the landowner or burn manager who conducts a burn on private property. This same provision is included in other states’ prescribed burn legislation and has effectively worked to increase burns by private landowners. A burn manager or landowner can still be sued for damages from fire or smoke if they are found to have been negligent. This is important because private landowners are typically unable to acquire insurance to conduct burns on their property due to the state’s lack of standards for limiting liability claims, certifying managers and approving burn plans.

Allowing private landowners to conduct burns is a win-win approach for the private landowner and the public that gets to reduce the risk of property damage due to wildfires, the state that has limited resources to conduct prescribed burning, and the Pinelands environment that needs fire to propagate. The insurance companies also benefit and support this measure, because states with prescribed burn programs have fewer wildfires and the companies report fewer claims.

The bill sponsors are dedicated to creating a burn program in the state and have reintroduced the bill (A1275) for consideration by the legislature and the Governor. It was already discussed and approved by the Assembly Agriculture and Natural Resources committee on February 24, 2014. We will continue to monitor the bill’s progress and hope that the legislature will act quickly to place the bill on the Governor’s desk this year.

©PPA, In 2013, the New Jersey Forest Fire Service burned PPA’s native grassland to prevent woody succession and encourage regeneration of native species.

Fairs & Festivals

Sunday, April 27
ACUA Earth Day Festival
Egg Harbor Township, 10am - 4pm

Sunday, June 1
Barnegat Bay Festival
Wannamaker Complex, Island Heights
10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Sunday, June 22
Burlington County Earth Fair
Historic Smithville Park, Eastampton
10:30 am - 4:00 pm

Saturday, June 28
Whitesbog Blueberry Festival
Historic Whitesbog Village, Browns Mills
10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Stop by PPA’s table at these events!
Despite the legal protections given to natural resources and many rare species in the Pinelands, not all rare species are protected. In fact, about 55 rare plant species in the Pinelands currently are not formally protected and are subject to destruction, habitat loss, and habitat degradation even within preservation areas.

The Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (the CMP) states that, "No development shall be carried out by any person unless it is designed to avoid irreversible adverse impacts on the survival of any local population of those plants designated by the Department of Environmental Protection as endangered plant species pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:5C-5.1 as well as the following plants, which are hereby found and declared to be threatened or endangered plants of the Pinelands." What follows is a list of 54 plant species. The listing of these 54 species in the first iteration of the CMP (1980) was based on the determinations of expert botanists in 1979. This list adopted by the Pinelands Commission still left out 17 species recommended for inclusion, but whose status fell within the grey area between "threatened" and "endangered." At that time, there was no official state list of rare plant species.

In 1984 the New Jersey Natural Heritage Program, the branch of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection that monitors rare plants in the state, was established and the Endangered Plant Species List Act followed in 1989. This list classified rare plant species in New Jersey as either "Endangered" or "Species of Concern" and is periodically updated. Endangered species are typically ranked as S1, which means they have five or fewer population occurrences in the state. Species of Concern are ranked as S2 (6 to 20 population occurrences) or S3 (21 to 50 population occurrences).

The Pinelands CMP did not include under its protections plant species "designated by the Department of Environmental Protection as endangered" until 2005, after the sustained efforts of PPA and citizen advocates. Before then, only the original list of 54 unprotected despite the CMP's call for the protection of "threatened" plant species.

PPA and New Jersey Conservation Foundation, with the help of species data provided by the Natural Heritage Program, have determined that 55 Species of Concern occur within the Pinelands. These 55 rare plant species will remain unprotected until the Pinelands Commission decides to either add these species to their original list of 54 or change the language of the CMP as stated above such that it references protections for state-listed "Species of Concern", too.

These 55 plant species are indeed rare and, in accordance with the conservation intent behind the Pinelands CMP, should be protected in the Pinelands. We are revisiting this issue and will be advocating for this change to the CMP.

©George Aronson - *Arethusa bulbosa*, Dragon's Mouth Orchid, is an S2 plant species that remains unprotected in the Pinelands.
Franklin Parker Preserve
continued from cover

The Preserve sprawls around the village of Chatsworth, mostly on the west side, bisected by County Routes 563 and 532. This gives you easy access to the property, and it’s marked with white diamond-shaped signs to help you keep track of the boundaries. You can park along public roads wherever it’s convenient and go exploring, or you can park in either of two designated parking areas and use the trail system.

A great way to see the Preserve is by boat. You can explore Chatworth Lake in a kayak or canoe. You might also try kayaking on the Wading River, where it crosses Route 563. It’s important that you appreciate the natural beauty of the snags, deadfall, and undisturbed vegetation, and leave things as you find them.

One of the most remarkable and satisfying things about the Preserve is that it’s not generally open to motorized vehicles. While there are plenty of public roads around and through the property, large portions of it are off limits to public traffic. Hikers, bicyclists, and horseback riders enjoy the peace and quiet, and wildlife and vegetation get an extra level of protection.

That extra protection is important, because the Preserve is home to virtually all of the characteristic plants and animals in the Pine Barrens, including many of our rare species whose numbers are dwindling due to motorized traffic in so many other places.

Visitors should be prepared for a wilderness experience. There’s no potable water. There’s one outhouse near the beginning of the Green Trail, where it crosses the airstrip. As in virtually all of the Pine Barrens, you may encounter ticks, chiggers, and Timber Rattlesnakes according to the season and weather patterns. If you see a rattler, just give it plenty of space.

For more information, go to www.njconservation.org. From there you can click on “Visit Our Preserves,” and select the Franklin Parker Preserve. You can view and download a map of the trail system, with the four interconnected trails and two observation platforms. You can also scroll down and select “View Franklin Parker Preserve in a larger map,” which brings up a map of the entire Preserve.

The Parker Preserve is a unique and beautiful piece of public open space, offering unique opportunities to appreciate and explore the Pine Barrens, one of New Jersey’s finest natural areas.

What is the Pinelands Commission?

The Pinelands Commission is an independent state agency overseen by a 15-member board of unpaid Commissioners. Seven members are appointed by the Governor of New Jersey, and confirmed by the state Senate; one member is appointed by each of the seven Pinelands counties; and one member is appointed by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

Their regular monthly meetings are open to the public and they need to see and hear from you. There is always time for general public comments on the agenda.

Upcoming Meetings:
Fri., May 9th, 9:30 am
Thurs., June 12th, 6:00 pm

Contact Information:
New Jersey Pinelands Commission
P.O. Box 359
15 Springfield Road
New Lisbon, NJ 08064
Ph: (609) 894-7300
www.state.nj.us/pinelands

Get Commission Email Alerts:
E-mail info@njpines.state.nj.us and ask to be included on Pinelands News and Events Alerts. Include your name.

Other Places to Visit:

Batona Trail
This 50-mile trail links Brendan Byrne, Wharton and Bass River State Forests. A trail map is available on the state of New Jersey’s website.

Wharton State Forest
Wharton is the largest single tract of land within the NJ State Park System. There are miles of hiking trails, historic Batsto Village, mountain biking, horseback riding and much more.

County Parks & Trails
We have some amazing county parks and trails. Here are a few: Jakes Branch, Cattus Island and Wells Mills (Ocean County), Rancocas Creek Canoe Trail (Burlington County), Estell Manor Park (Atlantic County)

For more information about what to see and do in the Pinelands visit:
www.pinelandsalliance.org/exploration
Gas Pipeline Still a Threat to the Pinelands

Editor's Note: This opinion piece by PPA Executive Director, Carleton Montgomery, was published in the Star Ledger on March 21, 2014. It was written as a response to the recent efforts of state Senator Jeff Van Drew (D-Cape May) to reverse the decision of the Pinelands Commission after the Commission failed to pass a resolution authorizing the construction of a natural gas pipeline in a protected part of the Pinelands. Van Drew claimed in a Press of Atlantic City article (Van Drew Building Support for a Pipeline to B.L. England, March 18, 2014) that he has the support of Governor Christie and Senate President Sweeney to construct this pipeline. (It has been slightly modified for this newsletter.)

Last January, the Pinelands Commission made a courageous, landmark decision in refusing to waive basic protections and authorize a natural gas pipeline across the Pinelands Forest Area - a pipeline designed solely to revive an old power plant on the shore of Great Egg Harbor.

Now, state Sen. Jeff Van Drew (D-Cape May) says he has the support of Governor Chris Christie and Senate President Stephen Sweeney (D-Gloucester) to override that decision and force the pipeline through. I don’t know if the governor and Senate president really have committed themselves, but I suggest that helping carry out such a power play would be terrible policy, legally indefensible and bad politics.

The Pinelands is New Jersey’s greatest natural treasure, and America’s most outstanding example of truly successful smart growth planning. In our nation’s most crowded state, we still have hundreds of thousands of acres of healthy forests, clean water in a vast aquifer and genuine wilderness you cannot find anywhere else in our intensely developed region. That is all possible only because the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan sets strict boundaries on development.

One of those basic protections is a regulation against using the Pinelands Forest Area as a transit for infrastructure such as the proposed pipeline. This rule has been in place for more than three decades, so it comes as no surprise to utilities or investors. It protects against the immediate harm such construction does to forests and wetlands.

Even more important, it protects against further infrastructure and sprawling development of all kinds that the pipeline would bring in its wake. And this would not stop with one pipeline: One breach in the Pinelands Plan invites more as surely as night follows day.

The plan has worked for 34 years because the Pinelands Commission retains its integrity, bipartisanship and independence as it implements the plan year after year, whoever takes office in Trenton.

In contrast to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey that is making headlines for all the wrong reasons, the Pinelands Commission is not a target for political patronage jobs. Its members are unpaid volunteers, are appointed by the counties as well as the governor, and have no power to direct contracts to favored businesses.

Forcing this pipeline through, especially after the commission voted against it, would strike a terrible blow to the integrity of New Jersey’s most innovative and successful public policy initiative. We hope Gov. Christie will not be the first governor to do that.

Rockland Capital Energy Investments is the Texas firm that bought the power plant and is the real force behind this project. Represented by Wolff & Samson, Rockland Capital has made targeted political donations and won the support of local government. Despite inaccurate claims by its proponents, the power brings no special tax benefits or subsidies to Upper Township or Cape May County.

This particular power plant is not actually necessary, and the route through the forest is not even the only way to bring natural gas to it. In fact, the plant was under state orders to shut down altogether until Rockland Capital and the pipeline idea came along, so it cannot be counted as essential to the state’s energy security or prosperity. Intervening now to override the Pinelands Plan would have all the hallmarks of using public office to advance narrow financial interests over the public good.

Before the Pinelands Commission’s January vote, former Govs. Brendan Byrne, Tom Kean, Jim Florio and Christie Whitman joined in submitting a letter to the commission asking it not to approve the pipeline because doing so ”would compromise the integrity of the Pinelands Plan and serve to encourage future development contrary to the vision the Plan sets out for growth and conservation in the Pinelands.”

All four of these leaders faced the same pressures for energy development and growth. Their voices reflect the bipartisanship and continuity that have marked our state’s extraordinary effort to save the Pinelands.

I hope Governor Christie and Senator Sweeney want to be part of that effort. This crisis is the best time to make their stand, defend the Pinelands Plan and be known as champions of the Pinelands.

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Pinelands Watch
Stay up to date on important issues and engage with local officials to advocate for Pinelands protections.

Sign up for the Pinelands Watch Newsletter.

Contact Theresa to sign up:
(609) 859 - 8860 x 24
theresa@pinelandsalliance.org
Pinelands Preservation Alliance (PPA) is located at 17 Pemberton Rd, Southampton NJ. Visit [www.pinelandsalliance.org](http://www.pinelandsalliance.org) and click on Event Calendar for a complete listing of Pinelands programs and trips provided by a wide variety of groups and organizations.

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**Calendar of Events**

**Pinelands Programs and Field Trips**

**May to June 2014**

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**Canoe/Kayak the Wading River (Burlington Co)**
Sun., May 4, 9 am, Sponsored by the West Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club

Tomorrow is Cinco de Mayo but we’ll celebrate a day early! Our annual paddle is 10 miles from Hawkpin Bridge to Beaver Branch. Boats can be rented from Mick’s Canoe & Kayak Rental www.mickscanoorental.com/ or call 800-281-1380. Meet at Hawkpin Bridge. Contact leaders to confirm trip and participation. George & Leona F, 609-259-3734 or Leona@pineypaddlers.com

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**Raptor Photography Session**
Mon., May 5, 9:00 am, Offered by Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge (Medford, NJ)

Our trained handlers will bring at least 6 birds out of their enclosures for photographing up close and on perches. Limited to 12 people. Pre-registration and pre-payment are required. $30/members, $40/non-members. Call 609-983-3329 or www.cedarrun.org

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**State History Fair**
Sat., May 10, 11am to 5pm, Washington Crossing State Park, County Route 546, Titusville

Experience five centuries of NJ’s history in one place. It started in 2004 as a celebratory event marking the 100th anniversary of NJ’s State Historic Sites. 2014 will mark its tenth year and New Jersey’s 350th anniversary. Its goal is to engage the public in discovering NJ’s history in a fun and enjoyable manner. Rain or shine. A $5/car parking donation is suggested.

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**Night Hike at the Refuge**
Sat., May 10, 7:30 pm, Offered by Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge (Medford, NJ)

Follow the trails from dusk to dark in search of some of our nighttime visitors. $10/adult, $8/child age 4 and up, ages 3 and under free. Advanced registration required. Call 609-983-3329.

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**Walk on the Wild Side Hike**
Sun., May 11, 1:30 pm, Offered by Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge (Medford, NJ)

This hike will also take place on June 8, join Cedar Run’s educators for a themed hike through their many trails. $10/adult, $8/child age 4 and up, ages 3 and under free. Advanced registration required. Call 609-983-3329 or www.cedarrun.org

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**Yard, Garden & Native Plant Sale - Beachwood, NJ**
Sat., May 17, Noon to 4pm, Jakes Branch County Park, 1100 Double Trouble Road

Informal presentations, make a craft, or take a guided nature walk. Local organizations will be on hand with literature and resources for the home gardener. Native plants for sale by local nurseries. FREE native seeds and plants to take home, bring your own native plants or seeds to swap! Please label each item with the common and scientific names, collection date and location. Call 732-281-2750 for more info.

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**Turtle Talk and Trek**
Sun., May 18, 1:30 pm, Rancocas Nature Center, 794 Rancocas Road, Westampton

Counting the non-native Red-eared Slider, eight species of turtles live in the Rancocas State Park. Before taking a hike to find the turtles in their favorite habitat, learn about their interesting biology. Pre-registration required. Cost: RNC members, $7/person, or $15/family; general public, $10/person, $21/family. Call 609-261-2495.

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**Living History Tours at Whitesbog Village**
Sun., May 25, 1pm to 3pm, Brendan Byrne State Forest, 120 Whitesbog Road

Experience life in the 1920’s and tour the Village museums with historical interpreters. Cost is $15. Call 609-893-4646 to register.

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**Canoe/Kayak the Great Egg Harbor River (Atlantic Co).**
Sat., May 31, 9am, Sponsored by West Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club

Enjoy a 10-mile paddle on the “egg” from Penny Pot to Weymouth Furnace. Meet at the Harley Dawn Diner – arrive early for breakfast. Rentals are available from Palace Restaurant and Outfitters at 609-625-8552 or www.thepalaceoutfitters.com Contact leaders to confirm trip and participation. George & Leona F, 609-259-3734 or leona@pineypaddlers.com

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**Wild Orchids of New Jersey**
Sun., June 1, 1pm to 3pm, Brendan Byrne State Forest, 120 Whitesbog Road

Wild orchids of the New Jersey Pine Barrens, by Ted Gordon, presenter and botanist. Reservations required. Cost: $5.00 per person. Call 609-893-4646 to register.

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**Starwatch at Batsto Village**
Sun., June 8, 7:30 pm, Batsto Village, 31 Batsto Rd, Hammonton

Enjoy an astronomy presentation and starwatch. This is a FREE event and is ADA Accessible. Astronomy presentation is run by the Willingboro Astronomical Society. Call 609-567-4559.

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**Canoeing/Kayaking Skills Refreshers on Lake Oswego**
Sun., June 8, 9am, Lake Oswego (Burlington County) Sponsored by West Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club

ACA Certified Instructors from the Sierra Club will show how to paddle efficiently, as well as safety practices, rescue techniques and equipment. Boats can be rented from Mick’s Canoe and Kayak Rental 800-281-1380 or www.mickscanoorental.com. Bring lunch, snacks and water. Contact leaders to confirm the event and your participation. George & Leona F. 609-259-3734 or Leona@pineypaddlers.com

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**Canoe/Kayak Cedar Creek on Father’s Day**
Sun., June 15, 9am, Double Trouble Park Headquarters (Ocean County) Sponsored by West Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club

Paddle 7 miles from Ore Pond to Dudley Park. Meet at Double Trouble Park HQ. Boats can be rented from Cedar Creek Campgrounds www.cedarcreeknj.com/ or 732-269-1413. Contact leaders to confirm trip and participation. George & Leona F. 609-259-3734 or leona@pineypaddlers.com

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**Get your event listed! Email becky@pinelandsalliance.org to have your event listed in our newsletter or online calendar.**
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