

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT MONTHLY REPORT

May 21, 2021 to June 20, 2021

Jason Hearon, Bureau Chief
Lisa Carben, Senior Management Assistant
Melissa Woerner, Habitat Planner
Tyler Kinney, Habitat Planner

HABITAT PLANNING

Tyler Kinney

Southern Region

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney continues to work with Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Rutgers University staff to develop a habitat monitoring contract. This contract was signed by Rutgers and submitted for signature by the Assistant Commissioner.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney attended a Green Acres event at the Menantico Ponds Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Holly Farm Tract. A guided tour was given to visitors that featured different habitat management ideas the Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) has for the tract.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney is working with the Department of Treasury to open a supplemental bid opportunity for the farm services contract. The bid is nearly ready to open and is awaiting Division approval.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney developed auction maps for the upcoming farm lease auction. Many calls are being fielded by interested bidders.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney oversaw the completion of aerial seeding operations in the Tuckahoe WMA impoundments. Impoundments Lester and Yellow-Legs (255 acres total) were seeded with 2,907lbs of Japanese Millet/Redtop Panic Grass seed mixture.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney began compiling resources to develop new "Wildlife Crossing" signs for high traffic roadways on Division WMAs.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney assisted the Green Acres (GA) Blue Acres Program with the submittal of a land management review for the restoration of a shoreline in the Nantuxent WMA. A letter of support was obtained, and the Division's Marine Fisheries Administration was notified as they are not a typical reviewing party.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney worked with crews to drawdown Heislerville WMA impoundment #3. A habitat sign was posted on site and the management plan was posted to the Division website. In addition, Land Use Regulation was contacted regarding the status of a GP16 permit to apply herbicide to the impoundments.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney attended a field meeting with the NJ Blue Bird Society. Issues were discussed regarding vandalism and off-road vehicle use on the Thundergut Pond WMA near several blue bird boxes. Pictures of vehicle tracks were taken and provided to the Regional Superintendent to give to the Bureau of Law Enforcement (BLE) during their monthly meeting.

Melissa Woerner

Northern Region

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner completed creation of auction maps for 14 farm leases in the northern region. Minimum bids were calculated based on soil rental rates.

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner worked with a tenant farmer to revise assigned in-kind work at the Columbia WMA due to field conditions.

Approximately 19 acres were planted with native warm season grass and pollinator species at the Merck Tract section of the South Branch WMA as part of in-kind work associated with an agricultural Special Use Permit (SUP).

Central Region

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner completed creation of auction maps for 8 farm leases in the central region. Minimum bids were calculated based on soil rental rates.

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner hosted a virtual meeting for the internal stakeholders of the Greenwood WMA Forest Stewardship Plan. The meeting introduced the project, current available data, and steps forward for developing management goals. A draft list of contacts for the external stakeholder group was developed and an initial request for representatives was emailed. Pine Creek Forestry also submitted a request to the Pinelands Commission for a Pinelands T&E report of the plan area.

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner conducted field visits at the Assunpink and Medford WMAs to develop a list of fields needing reclamation work this summer/fall. These fields will be cleared and planted in preparation for the upcoming new farm leases. Information was sent to a contract farmer and DFW is awaiting response on his availability to conduct the work.

All Regions/Miscellaneous

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner attended the virtual Division meeting.

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner is working with the Office of Leases and Concessions to obtain required paperwork and set up a purchase order for the auctioneer for the upcoming public farm auctions.

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner provided invoices to the Office of Business Administration to settle federal match requirements for the Restoration Monitoring grant.

As part of DEP's Invasive Species Plan Steering Committee, Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner provided responses to questions regarding the mission, immediate needs, and priorities of invasive species management in New Jersey.

The Office of Natural Resource Restoration hosted a bid walk at the Higbee Beach WMA for the Pond Creek Marsh restoration project.

NORTHERN REGION

Susan Predl, Regional Superintendent
Jim Hartobey, Crew Supervisor
Christopher Murphy, Crew Supervisor

Staff unloaded 200 Morrell archery targets and stored them in a barn at the Pequest WMA.

Regional Superintendent Susan Predl showed representatives of the NJ Conservation Foundation, Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey, the Ramapough Lenape Nation and others a number of fields at the Whittingham WMA that would be available for organic farming through a SUP.

Regional Superintendent Susan Predl participated in a virtual staff meeting on the use of drones on WMAs. Permits, licensing and Land Management Reviews (LMR) that might be required were discussed.

Regional Superintendent Susan Predl met virtually with Adria Wetzel to discuss applications for request for use of DEP property.

Regional Superintendent Susan Predl met with a Tuff Greens contractor at the Lockatong WMA to discuss the cost and process for removing a large tree hedgerow between fields. Grassland songbirds prefer large expanses of habitat (a minimum of 50 acres). The Division is trying to expand and improve grassland bird habitat in this portion of the Lockatong WMA.

Regional Superintendent Susan Predl met virtually to discuss the Fish and Wildlife Digest. Portions of the Digest were reviewed, and edits were made and submitted.

Repairs were made to the steps going down to the Split Rock Reservoir boat docks. Grates were cleared of debris and a large gulley formed by heavy rains was repaired.

A private contractor was contacted regarding the application of herbicide to control vegetation on the Ryker Lake, Silver Lake and the Amwell Lake dams.

Regional Superintendent Susan Predl participated in a conference call briefing by the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) for DEP regarding severe winter storm and snowstorms and required record-keeping.

Northern region land staff participated in a virtual Division meeting.

Improvements and pot hole repairs were made to the Belvidere boat launch at the request of the Mayor of Belvidere. The ramp was re-graded, and gullies removed. Lumber was ordered so that a split rail fence could be erected to close off a secondary access point to the boat ramp parking area and to direct those parking vehicles with trailers so that vehicles do not inadvertently get blocked in.

Regional Superintendent Susan Predl contacted Belvidere Township regarding their request to plant pollinating wildflowers in a portion of the Belvidere boat ramp property.

Portable toilets were ordered for the Belvidere boat ramp site and for the Pequest Archery range.

A field trial permit was issued for a May event at the Hainesville WMA.

A total of 450 pheasant crate parts were unloaded at the Rockport Game Farm. The boxes of crate parts were counted to ensure that there were enough parts to make 450 crates. The boxes were sorted into North, Central and South to facilitate the pickup of Central and South's boxes.

An estimate was obtained for the removal of large dying sycamore and ash trees on the Capoolong Creek WMA.

Right-to-Know surveys were updated, Crew Supervisor Jim Hartobey was assigned to complete the surveys for Black River and Rockport WMA buildings.

A landowner near the Pequest WMA complained that the public was crossing his private property to access the Pequest River. A review of his property survey indicated that he indeed owned the property between Pequest Furnace Road and the Pequest River. Unfortunately, the New Jersey Hunting and Trapping Explorer app does not reflect this since the County and Township did not update their tax maps. Since this has been an on-going problem, it was suggested to the property owner that he bring his survey map to the Township or County Administrator.

Staff continued to mow and string trim parking lots and pick up garbage at northern region WMAs.

Regional Superintendent Susan Predl contacted First Energy regarding the sub-station in the Columbia WMA. There have been numerous requests by the public to remove the gate and allow public access to the WMA. First Energy staff has requested that our gate remain closed until December 2021 when the new sub-station becomes operational. First Energy is on site daily building a new sub-station where the old substation had a leak.

A SUP was issued to the Appalachian Bowmen for their August 3D archery shoot.

Regional Superintendent Susan Predl participated in a virtual meeting on the range brochure being prepared by I&E.

Handicapped accessible sidewalks are being installed at the Black River, Clinton, Pequest and Flatbrook archery ranges.

Debris was removed from a dam on Reynolds Pond in the Paulinskill River WMA.

A key was provided to Law Enforcement for access to Snake Hill Road in the Wildcat Ridge WMA.

CENTRAL REGION

Pete Winkler, Regional Superintendent
Mike Haines, Crew Supervisor Equipment Operations
Bill Torry, Crew Supervisor WMAs

Regional Superintendent Pete Winkler attended the virtual online Board of Directors meeting at the Horse Park of New Jersey and for the Lighthouse Center for Natural Resource Education representing the Division of Fish and Wildlife.

Staff continue to issue Field Trial and SUPs consistent with the latest State issued Covid-19 related Executive Orders.

Crews continue to work on 3 CBT-M access projects to improve parking areas, ramps and roads at the Swan Bay, Manahawkin and Great Bay Blvd. WMAs.

Coordinating with Law Enforcement, BLM is cleaning up many illegal dumping incidents within the Central Region WMAs.

Crews are working on completed spring plantings for food plots and pollinators at the Stafford Forge, Manasquan and Assunpink WMAs.

A request for proposals for beaver mitigation was announced for the Webs Mill Bog site within the Greenwood WMA. The site contains a number of rare plants which are being impacted by flooding from a nuisance beaver dam. No successful proposals were received. We will continue to work with Forest Fire and the Office of Natural Lands Management to design a more permanent solution for this ongoing issue.

Central Region staff attended a meeting with the Director and Human Resource representatives to learn about the title merger affecting their working titles.

Regional Superintendent Pete Winkler attended a meeting with the Divisions Office of Geographic Information Systems (OGIS) staff for an interactive mapping application to display pheasant and quail stocking for the 2021 stocking season.

Central Region staff attended the virtual Division staff meeting.

Regional Superintendent Pete Winkler attended 3 meetings with Bureau of Law Enforcement staff and DEP Division of Information Technology (DOIT) to review surveillance cameras for the newly upgraded Central Region ranges.

Regional Superintendent Pete Winkler attended the Wetlands Seminar series and a workshop on the NJ Tidal Wetland Reference Tool.

Regional Superintendent Pete Winkler attended a meeting with I&E staff about a range brochure.

The following groups and activities utilized the Assunpink Conservation Center and the Central Office Meeting Room during this reporting period:

NA – COVID 19

SOUTHERN REGION

Nathan Figley, Regional Superintendent
Brad Heffley, Crew Supervisor
Dan Baker, Crew Supervisor
Mason Reeves, Crew Supervisor

Southern region crews have continued performing routine trash clean-up at boat ramps, shooting ranges, and other high use WMAs.

Road crew staff completed road work in Millville WMA (Lake Audrey), the Tuckahoe Archery Training Range, and patched holes in the paved roadways at Tuckahoe, Menantico Ponds and Dennisville WMAs.

Road crew staff will be working on the boat ramp located on the Egg Island WMA and the hunter training range on the Millville WMA. Some road repair materials have been unavailable (crushed shell and crushed concrete) and has delayed work in certain areas.

Three paving jobs were completed during the reporting period. Roadways located on the Menantico Ponds and Dennisville WMAs were micro surfaced. This process combines an asphalt emulsion and aggregate (stone), preserving and protecting the roadway underneath. Woods Road on the Tuckahoe WMA (leading to the Mosquito Landing Boat Ramp) was chip sealed. This cost-effective process spreads a layer of hot asphalt which is then covered by small stone and can be easily maintained by road crew staff.

Staff continue to issue Field Trial and SUPs consistent with the latest State issued Covid-19 related Executive Orders.

Senior Repairer Jeff Wettstein repaired the locks on all Southern Region Office doors. The locks became difficult to operate and are now functioning properly. He also constructed interpretive trail signs that were installed on the Holly Farm section of the Menantico Ponds WMA for a Green Acres Event.

Staff spent a large portion of their time preparing for a Green Acres Event that took place on June 3rd at Menantico Ponds WMA Holly Farm Section. The event was highlighting a long sought-after purchase of Holly Orchards and commemorating Green Acres 60th Anniversary. Improvements staff made to the area were: creation of an interpretive trail, removal of invasive species, restoring power to the building, minor fixes to building (general cleanup, making watertight, fixing glass windows and doors, patching holes in driveway/around storm drains/paved walkway), creation of pollinator habitat (11 acres), grassland habitat (5 acres), wildlife food plot (11 acres). A final portion of the project is yet to be completed and that is the creation of a transitional succession area. This will highlight the creation of edge habitat, going from grassland to scrub/shrub to mature forest habitats across those transitions.

Regional Superintendent Nathan Figley provided a monthly report to dam safety for the no name dam located a portion of the Salem River WMA.

Pheasant crates were delivered from Central Region Staff. These crates will replace damaged crates and need to be assembled by staff.

Meetings Attended: BLM Staff Weekly, BLM/BLE monthly, Holly Farm Architect, Cumberland County Federation Meeting, Saltmarsh Sparrow Working Group

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SECTION

LAND ACQUISITIONS

Lisa Carben, Senior Management Assistant

Nothing to report this period.