

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT MONTHLY REPORT

June 21, 2021 to July 20, 2021

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

HABITAT PLANNING

Melissa Woerner

Northern Region

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner attended a Teams meeting regarding management of a 145-acre forest legacy tract adjacent to the Berkshire Valley Wildlife Management Area (WMA).

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner provided information to Public Service Electric & Gas (PSE&G) to compensate a tenant farmer at the South Branch WMA for loss of crop acreage due to construction along the right-of-way.

Central Region

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner hosted a virtual meeting with the Pinelands Commission regarding the development of the Greenwood WMA Forest Stewardship Plan. The meeting introduced the project, currently available data, and steps forward for developing management goals. A list of contacts for the external stakeholder group was finalized and four external stakeholder meeting options were scheduled. The Pinelands T&E report was received.

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner participated in a call with members of the American Woodcock Society and Ruffed Grouse Society to discuss woodcock management in the central region.

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner coordinated with C. Creamer Land Services to obtain a quote for reclaiming multiple overgrown fields at the Assunpink WMA.

All Regions/Miscellaneous

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner attended virtual weekly status update meetings for the Pond Creek Marsh restoration project at the Higbee Beach WMA. Six sealed bids were received for the construction of the project and opened during a live broadcast. The bids are currently being reviewed for accuracy and the winning bid is expected to be confirmed before the end of July. The Pond Creek Marsh restoration project webpage on the Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) website was updated.

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner attended a Teams call regarding the new ArcGIS Online application for reviewing prescribed burns.

The dates for the northern, central, and southern public farm auctions were confirmed. Tent, chair, and port-a-potty rentals were arranged for the northern farm auction at Pequest. Block and lot information for each lease was provided to the Office of Leases and Concessions. Required paperwork and the purchase order for the auctioneer was secured. Seed costs were obtained to update the in-kind service rates for planting various crops.

Southern Region

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney is working with the Department of Treasury (DOT) to open a supplemental bid opportunity for the Farm Services Contract. The supplemental bid has been approved by the Division. The bid opening date is expected next week. Contractors will be notified by Tyler Kinney, as well as staff from DOT.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney continues to work with Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner to prepare for the upcoming farm lease auction. Soil rates, auction maps and block & lot spreadsheets were assembled. The next step will be creating in-kind assignments for calendar year 2022.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney developed a proposal to reclaim 2.2 acres in the Winslow WMA. This area will be bid out as a part of a larger lease area in the upcoming farm lease auction. This project is currently in land management review.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney is coordinating fall habitat work with Crew Supervisors. Planned work includes fall planting operations, boom mowing of phragmites along the Tuckahoe WMA impoundment dikes, and potential planting of a new field in located in the Thundergut Pond WMA.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney reached out to the Division of Land Use to receive an update on the GP16 wetland permit applied for in 2020 for phragmites management in the Heislerville impoundments. The Division of Land Use confirmed that we will receive the permit by the end of August, setting us up for a late September/early October project start date.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney reached out to contractor Pine Creek Forestry for an update on the Lenape Forest Stewardship plan draft prescriptions, and the status of the proposed Atlantic white-cedar (AWC) restoration on the Lenape Tract. The prescriptions are in development and the AWC restoration is awaiting the availability of sub-contracted forestry equipment.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney attended a meeting with the Sandy Blue Acres program and DFW staff regarding the Money Island project land management review. The review is currently pending discussions regarding project timing restrictions.

All Regions

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney attended a United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) "Forestry for Birds" virtual seminar.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney attended a meeting with New Jersey Forest Fire Services to receive training on their new RxB GIS application.

Habitat Planner Tyler Kinney developed a PowerPoint presentation on Woodcock Habitat Management plans in the southern region, to be presented at the September 2021 Fish and Game Council meeting. This presentation will be updated as more information is collected.

NORTHERN REGION

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

Land Management staff continue to mow parking lots and remove trash from WMAs throughout the region.

Low hanging branches were cut on an approach road to the Paulinskill River WMA. Herbicide was applied to the invasive Kudzu vine at the Belvidere boat ramp.

High and low hazard dams continue to be mowed and cleared. Trees that have fallen near Baldwin Lake were removed to facilitate access to the dam.

A contractor was hired to remove hazardous trees at the Capoolong Creek and Wildcat Ridge WMAs.

Regional Superintendent Susan Predl participated in a Forest Legacy conference call with the United States Forest Service (USFS) regarding a 145-acre tract of land adjacent to the Berkshire Valley WMA. At this time, the USFS is requesting a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in which the public could continue to hunt this parcel, and the Division would be able to implement a Forest Stewardship Plan at some point in the future. The Division requested that the USFS investigate the possibility of transferring ownership of this parcel of land to Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Updated OSHA forms were submitted.

Regional Superintendent Susan Predl submitted comments and edits on the draft Agricultural Farm Lease document.

Regional Superintendent Susan Predl participated in a conference call regarding sound abatement at the Clinton rifle range, the deployment of cameras at Division ranges, and spending down the balance in Preserve New Jersey (PNJ) grant funds.

Regional Superintendent Susan Predl viewed all fields in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area where pheasants could be stocked to determine if soybeans were planted, which would result in no cover during the pheasant season. The Division does not stock those fields that do not provide cover for pheasants.

Discussions were held with a contractor that will be repairing the rotting boards on the Roy Bridge in the Flatbrook WMA regarding the anticipated completion date, and requirements to close the roads approaching the bridge.

A Special Use Permit (SUP) was issued to a Community Search and Rescue group that will attempt to repaint and cover the graffiti in the Wildcat Ridge WMA, as part of their training exercises.

All archery targets for the North and Central regions have been delivered, unloaded, and stored.

Estimates are being obtained for planting evergreen trees along the Clinton rifle range for sound abatement. Requests for Proposals will be mailed to contractors. The brush on site will have to be cut, large evergreen trees, along with soil and water will have to be brought to the site.

Regional Superintendent Susan Predl went to Collins Pond in the Sparta Mountain WMA along with Wildlife Services personnel to see if a beaver clogging the dam outflow was causing flooding on adjacent private property. The clog did not appear to be caused by beaver and was removed by Wildlife Services.

Regional Superintendent Susan Predl participated in an online Hunting Narrative meeting regarding website design, and how to direct the public that might want to hunt in New Jersey.

Regional Superintendent Susan Predl prepared a summary of the northern region Land Management highlights for the Division's Annual Report.

Staff monthly activity reports were compiled.

A request for a prescribed burn was submitted on behalf of the D&R Greenway, a non-profit organization that manages a portion of the South Branch WMA, known as the Cider Mill Preserve.

Candor, Ranger Pro and Plateau herbicides were applied to fields and sorghum, buckwheat and sunflowers were planted in those fields at Black River and Berkshire Valley WMAs.

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 DFW.

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

Crews completed 4 CBT-M access projects to improve parking areas, ramps and roads at Assunpink, Swan Bay, Manahawkin and Great Bay Blvd WMAs.

Coordinating with Law Enforcement, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is cleaning up many illegal dumping incidents within the Central Region WMAs.

Regional Superintendent Pete Winkler attended a meeting as part of the Southern Barnegat Bay Watershed Planning Team.

Regional Superintendent Pete Winkler attended a meeting to review the latest draft of the 2021-22 Hunting Digest.

Yearly Dam Inspections were conducted for 7 dams that the Division is partners with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. (NRCS).

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 the Millville WMA including Ackley Road and the Hunter Training Range. Bates Blvd, that runs through the Union Lake WMA was also graded. Staff will concentrate their efforts on the Glassboro WMA for the next month.

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

Staff prepared the Southern Region Office parking lot to be resurfaced.

Senior Repairer Jeff Wettstein has been preparing for the Tuckahoe WMA managed waterfowl hunt, improving wildlife viewing platforms, and making repairs on docks at WMA fishing access points.

Archery targets were ordered, staff received the shipment and will be installing at ranges over the next couple of weeks.

Fence panels that protect water control structures from vandalism were stolen from the Corbin City section of the Tuckahoe WMA. The theft was posted to the Division's Facebook page, with the hopes it would lead to their recovery.

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

Staff have been working on pheasant crates; making minor repairs to damaged crates, stamping crates with DFW, and power washing them.

Meetings Attended: BLM Staff Weekly, BLM/BLE monthly, RxB App Meeting, Cumberland County Federation Meeting, DU Managed Waterfowl Hunt, DU property dedication.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SECTION

LAND ACQUISITIONS

Lisa Carben, Senior Management Assistant

Nothing to report this period.