

# **BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT MONTHLY REPORT**

March 21, 2024 to April 20, 2024

**Jason Hearon, Bureau Chief**  
Tyler Kinney, Habitat Planner  
Melissa Woerner, Habitat Planner

## **HABITAT PLANNING**

Tyler Kinney

### **Southern Region**

Tyler Kinney continues to facilitate spring planting activities. A purchase order was placed for farm service contractor labor. Spring forage/cover mix and pollinator seed were delivered. Farm service contractors are boom-mowing and working on preparing soil for planting activities.

Tyler Kinney tended to several matters regarding the Glassboro Wildlife Management Area (WMA) restoration project. Fence installation is ongoing. Contractors will begin staking out the site for planting activities to be conducted in May 2024.

Tyler Kinney has attended a meeting with Solitude Lake Management to discuss several herbicide projects. A site visit will be conducted in the Port Republic WMA to assess a Bamboo stand. A site visit will also be conducted in the Dennis Creek WMA to assess a Wisteria treatment. A land management review was submitted for this Wisteria treatment. Solitude Lake Management is preparing contracts for fall phragmites treatments in the Abbotts Meadow and Tuckahoe WMAs.

Tyler Kinney has begun the process of reprocurring the T2931 Custom Farm Services Contract. RFP draft development is ongoing.

### **Coastal Unit**

Tyler Kinney continues to attend weekly meetings on the Pond Creek Marsh Restoration Project. The project team is currently coordinating to navigate hurdles related to dynamic compaction efforts and water drawdown efforts. Additionally, a check-in meeting was held with the municipal leadership. Concerns were expressed over truck traffic.

Tyler Kinney is coordinating with New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) Coastal Engineering and NJDEP Land Resource Protection to install an emergency culvert to alleviate flooding issues associated with an impoundment in the Heislerville WMA. An emergency authorization was granted. Coastal Engineering is working on developing a scope of work.

Tyler Kinney drafted a letter to the United States Army Corps of Engineers to express interest in sediment associated with the "Philadelphia to the Sea" Scoping Study.

Tyler Kinney organized a meeting with the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and the Wetlands Institute to discuss restoration at Ephraim Island in the Cape May Coastal Wetlands WMA.

Tyler Kinney developed and is obtaining quotes for caution signage for use with beneficial use projects.

Tyler Kinney attended a meeting to review the Lighthouse Center Restoration.

### **All Regions**

Tyler Kinney attended the State of Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey (CHANJ) land manager meeting.

Tyler Kinney attended several NJDEP Wetlands Team meetings.

### **Northern Region**

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner attended two bi-weekly status calls for the Hyperhumus wetlands restoration project at the Paulinskill River WMA. Permits are currently being prepared and reviewed with plans to submit them in the next few months.

A contractor completed field work to delineate wetlands at a 50-acre habitat management site at the Pequest WMA. The contractor is now processing Geographic Information System (GIS) files and preparing the wetlands delineation report and resource mapping.

A contractor completed 25 acres of herbicide treatment targeting invasive Japanese barberry at the White Lake WMA.

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner attended a call to discuss the Sparta Mountain Forest Stewardship Plan.

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner met with the permit farmer at the Merck Tract of the South Branch WMA to discuss 2024 farming operations and in-kind work. Since 2019, approximately 67 acres of fields have been taken out of agricultural row crop rotation and 78 acres have been planted with a native warm season grass and wildflower mix to benefit pollinators, grassland birds, and early successional wildlife.

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner attended three calls to discuss the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA's) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) upcoming funding opportunity with hopes of submitting an application for the Hyperhumus wetlands restoration at the Paulinskill River WMA.

### **Central Region**

Seed orders were completed in preparation for planting of approximately 94 acres of fields that will benefit a variety of wildlife at the Assunpink, Colliers Mills, Stafford Forge, and Greenwood Forest WMAs. One of the seed order deliveries has been received and one is still pending. Planting operations are anticipated to begin in May.

An order was placed for approximately 125 smooth alder trees to improve habitat for American woodcock at the Prospertown Lake WMA. These trees will be planted in partnership with the Jersey Shore chapter of the American Woodcock Society at an upcoming volunteer event in May. In addition, 20 persimmon trees will be planted to provide food and cover for a variety of wildlife species.

### **All Regions/Miscellaneous**

Habitat Planner Melissa Woerner attended an internal NJDEP meeting of land decision makers and managers in advance of the upcoming CHANJ meeting.

## **NORTHERN REGION**

### **Anthony McBride, Regional Superintendent**

Jim Hartobey, Crew Supervisor  
Robert Bodnar, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Mark DeVito, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Trevor Hull, Heavy Equipment Operator  
Vacant, Sr. Wildlife Worker

Christopher Murphy, Crew Supervisor  
Bill DeYoung, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Septembio Garo, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Jonathan Kenney, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Nick Yanuzzelli, Wildlife Worker  
Jonathan Kaye, Wildlife Worker

Crews continue with lot clean ups, equipment maintenance, and road maintenance at northern region WMAs.

Staff continue to push forward with habitat improvements: work continues at Columbia, Beaver Brook, Berkshire Valley, Flatbrook Roy, Clinton, Whittingham, Paulinskill, and White Lake WMAs.

Staff continued mowing fields and conducting prescribed burns with the cooperation of New Jersey Forest Fire Service in preparation for habitat work this season.

Staff continued ordering equipment for habitat work.

Crew Supervisors Jim Hartobey and Chris Murphy worked on seed orders for spring habitat planting. The National Wild Turkey Federation will supply seed for some of the habitat work on northern region WMAs.

Staff continued stocking trout in the northern and southern regions.

Heavy Equipment Operator Trevor Hull repaired a culvert pipe on the driveway to the Appalachian Bowmen barn at the Whittingham WMA.

Regional Superintendent Anthony McBride continued to work on the decommissioning of several dams, including the Warren Mills Dam and Buckhorn Creek Dam in Warren County and the Rockafellows Mills Dam in Hunterdon County.

Regional Superintendent Anthony McBride and the other Regional Superintendents met with a representative from Trailforks to learn how to administrate the appearance of trails on the website for our WMAs.

Phase two of the removal of pens at the Rockport Game farm has been completed. One phase remains for the remainder of the pens.

## **CENTRAL REGION**

### **Pete Winkler, Regional Superintendent**

Wendy Barbuck, Agency Services Rep. 3

Bill Torry, Crew Supervisor WMAs

Vacant, Sr. Wildlife Worker

Zachary Mahon, Wildlife Worker

Tim Ruth, Wildlife Worker

Brian Kubin, Crew Supervisor

Anthony Carben, Sr. Wildlife Worker

Brian Hankins, Wildlife Worker

Robert Madden, Heavy Equipment Operator

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

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

Crews started stocking trout following the 2024 stocking plan.

Regional Superintendent Pete Winkler attended the Barnegat Bay Lighthouse restoration meeting.

Crews are prepping for spring pollinator and food plot plantings.

Regional Superintendent Pete Winkler attended the Lead by Example Energy Team quarterly meeting.

Regional Superintendents met with Trailforks representatives to understand how Mountain Biking Trails and other trails on WMAs are represented on their website. We will be looking into their data to determine best practices for closing trails during appropriate times to avoid conflicts with our main user groups.

Staff responded to a potential issue with a dam in the Greenwood Forest WMA. The issue was addressed, and the dam has been repaired.

Demolition of an abandoned structure has begun at the Butterly Bogs WMA.

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

Women of the Outdoors  
National Wildlife Turkey Federation  
Mosquito Control Commission Meeting  
Law Enforcement  
CLUE Bureau Meeting  
ENSAC  
Deer Project  
Turkey Training

## **SOUTHERN REGION**

### **Nathan Figley, Regional Superintendent**

Brad Heffley, Crew Supervisor  
Sean Clayton, Sr. Wildlife Worker

Vacant, Crew Supervisor  
Steve Dobrosky, Heavy Equipment Operator  
Jennings Jones, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Erin Peek, Heavy Equipment Operator

Mason Reeves, Crew Supervisor  
Nicholas Carros, Sr. Wildlife Worker  
Ben Keys, Wildlife Worker  
Jeffrey Wettstein, Sr. Repairer  
Rich Ingraldi, Wildlife Worker

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

Road Crew staff continue working on roads in the Glassboro WMA. Wet weather severely slowed work here, but gravel is now being delivered and staff are addressing the major potholes that formed in the roads. Multiple WMA roadways and field edges were boom mowed, including sections of the Tuckahoe, Makepeace Lake, Millville, DOD Ponds and Dennis Creek WMAs. Glassboro roads will also be boom mowed, this work will be completed within the next two weeks depending upon weather.

Quotes were received for road material to be delivered to the DOD Ponds WMA. Staff are waiting on additional paperwork from the contractor to request the purchase order.

Staff have begun routine maintenance mowing of dams, offices, boat ramps, and WMA access points. There has been an increased number of downed trees throughout the Southern Region WMAs, most likely caused by the water saturated soil.

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

Staff continue working with the Office of Resource Development (ORD) to complete repairs on the Maskells Mill, Shaws Mill, and Harrisonville Lake Dams. A consultant has inspected these dams and is working on putting together a quote to repair them. Staff continue to monitor Union Lake levels as mandated by Dam Safety. The most recent reading indicated the lowest lake level since December 1, 2023.

Staff participate in weekly construction meetings regarding the Pond Creek Project. A ribbon cutting scheduled for April 24<sup>th</sup> was postponed and will be rescheduled for a later date. In preparation for the ribbon cutting, sign shop staff had just completed a rush order for a new Higbee Beach WMA sign (because someone drove through the existing sign, splintering it into 1,000 pieces) and installed it. Trucks continue material deliveries here and will continue to do so until the Memorial Day cutoff date. Staff coordinated with Cape May Mosquito Commission and a contractor to determine a schedule for the mosquito commission to conduct routine surveys.

Southern Region received the spring seed order and will begin prepping fields as soon as they are dry enough for equipment to operate in them. This prep work has been delayed because of the weather. Staff noted that the fields planted this past fall with crimson clover are looking good.

Staff reviewed the trout stocking schedule and assigned staff to various runs within the Southern Region. On some of the stocking runs, Southern Region staff utilize what we term as "transfer tanks." A transfer tank is used to take fish from the large flat-bodied stocking truck into a smaller pickup (with tank mounted in back). This allows staff to stock the trout quickly and efficiently, by reducing the number of locations each vehicle needs to go to. Each year these transfer tanks are inspected to make sure all oxygen lines are functioning properly, and the tanks are holding water. This year the oxygen lines were replaced on one of the transfer

trucks because they had cracked. A simple fix, but an important one to be certain the dissolved oxygen levels in the tank are appropriate to support the trout while being trucked to the lake they will be stocked in.

Rich Ingraldi developed a parking area improvement plan for the Featherbed Lane WMA. The parking area serves as an important vantage point for birders to view grassland nesting species. This work was delayed because of the weather, the ground was too soft to operate equipment. It is now expected to be completed in the next two weeks.

Regional Superintendent Nathan Figley is working on hiring seasonal staff to help wildlife workers in their day-to-day activities. Tasks will include stocking of game/fish, mowing, weed whacking, planting/discing/plowing fields, maintenance of parking areas and boat ramps, and picking up trash. Three candidates have been selected and paperwork has been sent to Human Resources.

Several encroachments on WMAs have been investigated and documented. Regional Superintendent Nathan Figley is working with the encroachers and the Bureau of Law Enforcement to address these issues.

Meetings Attended: BLM Staff Weekly, Bureau of Law Enforcement, NJSFSC, Higbee Beach Project Meeting.

## **PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SECTION**

### **LAND ACQUISITIONS**

Lisa Carben, Executive Assistant

Nothing to report this period.