



# *Annual Report* **2021-2022**

**To protect and manage the unique and endangered natural communities and species of the Albany Pine Bush, for ecological benefits and controlled and appropriate public recreational and educational use.**



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*Photo by Allen Landes*

## Dear friends,

We're proud to present the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission's Annual Report. It provides highlights from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022, including how we protect and manage the Globally Rare, Nationally Significant and Locally Distinct Albany Pine Bush Preserve in addition to the programs and opportunities offered by the Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center.

The 3,400-acre Albany Pine Bush Preserve is located in New York's Capital District and protects one of the best remaining inland pitch-pine scrub oak barrens in the world. This is an extraordinary fire-dependent ecosystem that provides habitat for many plants and animals, which includes more than 20 percent of the New York State-designated wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need, such as the endangered Karner blue butterfly. The preserve is the largest open space area in the Capital District and has the distinction of being a National Natural Landmark, National Recreation Trail Site, Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Site, a New York State Unique Area and Bird Conservation Area, and a National Audubon Society Important Bird Area. Characterized by rolling sand dunes and over 20 miles of trails, the preserve offers visitors many recreational opportunities including

hiking, bird watching, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, and paddling. The Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission is a public-private partnership created by the New York State Legislature in 1988 to protect and manage the preserve and provide the public with educational and recreational opportunities.

As the gateway or "front door" to the Pine Bush, the Discovery Center is a gold LEED-certified interpretive center where visitors come to understand why the Pine Bush is rare and special. A visit to this unique destination is an exciting exploration where learning comes naturally through interactive exhibits, an outdoor Discovery Trail, and numerous programs through all four seasons on ecology, natural history, cultural history, and natural resource management.

For yet another year, we worked through the challenges of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, we were able to continue public programs and visitation at the Discovery Center on a limited schedule, then finally opening back to 7-days a week at the start of February. We hosted both in-person and virtual school programs, science lectures, educational activities, and webinars. The preserve and trail system continued to be a major draw for tens of thousands of new and regular visitors enjoying this essential open space resource in our region.

Throughout the seasons, we have several opportunities for you to get involved! Visit our website at [AlbanyPineBush.org](http://AlbanyPineBush.org) to donate to the Friends of the Pine Bush Community, get details on our family programs like a full moon hike, how to submit to our annual photo exhibit or participate in the new Karner Clips Challenges. You can volunteer as a community scientist or as a preserve naturalist, sign up for our newsletter and follow us on social media, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. We look forward to you joining us to protect, manage and discover the Albany Pine Bush!

*Sincerely,*

**Anthony Luisi**  
**Board Chair**

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Director, Region 4

**Christopher A. Hawver**  
**Executive Director**  
Albany Pine Bush  
Preserve Commission



# Background and Mission

Photo by Sean Sullivan

## What is the Commission and what does it do?

Established by the New York State Legislature in 1988, the Commission is a unique public-private partnership that works with willing landowners and a number of municipal, state, federal and private partners to assure the protection, restoration and management of the natural and cultural resources of the Albany Pine Bush.

In advancing its mission to protect and manage the Albany Pine Bush for ecological, recreational and education benefits, the Commission believes in a balanced approach that takes into account the positions and recommendations of its members as well as input from property owners, interest groups and the general public. It has no regulatory authority.

## Where is the Albany Pine Bush, and what does it contain?

The Pine Bush contains remnants of ice age sand plains that were part of a vast river delta at the edge of Glacial Lake Albany. The Pine Bush spans parts of the cities of Albany and Schenectady and the Towns of Colonie and Guilderland and supports

the best worldwide example of an inland pitch pine-scrub oak barrens—a unique ecosystem—and more than 70 wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The Albany Pine Bush Preserve consists of 3,350 acres of lands protected within the Pine Bush and managed by the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission.

## How does the Commission protect and manage a viable Preserve?

**Protects land:** The Commission works with willing landowners to acquire or otherwise protect priority lands within Pine Bush Protection Areas with a goal of building a truly viable preserve of approximately 5,380 acres.

**Manages land:** The Commission uses prescribed fire, as well as mechanical and chemical treatments to reduce wildfire risk and restore ecological communities, wildlife habitat, and control invasive species.

**Reviews proposed development projects:** The Commission does not have the ability to approve or deny development projects, but does advise

Commission member agencies on how a project (in the study area) may affect the creation and management of a viable preserve. The Commission also provides recommendations on how potentially negative impacts may be minimized or avoided altogether.

**Offers educational programing:** The Discovery Center provides visitors with interactive exhibits and activities, and is an invaluable tool for schools, colleges, scouts and other groups. Through hands-on discovery-based learning, staff and volunteers help visitors learn about the unique characteristics of the Pine Bush and nurture a sense of stewardship for the preserve.

# The Board of Directors

The Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission is established in the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and consists of eleven voting members: the Commissioner of NYSDEC; the Commissioner of the NYS State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; the Mayor of the City of Albany; the Town Supervisors of the Towns of Colonie and Guilderland; the Chief Executive Officer of the County of Albany; the State Director of the New York field office of The Nature Conservancy and four members appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The four appointed private citizen members of the Commission are, by training, education, experience or attainment, qualified to analyze, interpret or support matters relevant to the protection, maintenance and management of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve.



**Hon. Kathy M. Sheehan**  
Mayor  
City of Albany



**Jessica Ottney Mahar**  
Director of Policy &  
Strategy  
The Nature Conservancy  
in New York



**Erik Kulleseid**  
Commissioner,  
NYS Office of Parks  
Recreation and  
Historic Preservation



**Hon. Peter Barber**  
Supervisor  
Town of Guilderland



**Hon. Peter Crumney**  
Supervisor  
Town of Colonie

Citizen Members:  
**Dr. Harvey Alexander**  
**John Brust**  
**Nancy Pierson**  
**Dr. Steven Rice**



**Anthony Luisi**  
Director, Region 4,  
NYS Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation



**Hon. Daniel P. McCoy**  
Executive  
Albany County



*Photo by Ellen Lu*



Photo by Mark Juliano

## Project and Programmatic Highlights

### Big News in the Pine Bush...

**New colony of Karner blue butterfly established.** On July 15, staff from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and our staff were joined by local press in the town of Colonie to release endangered Karner blue butterflies and “jump start” a new subpopulation in the preserve.

**State and national support.** With the support of the NYSDEC – Division of Forest Protection, the USDA-Forest Service awarded APBPC a \$150,000.00 Wildfire Risk Reduction matching grant. The \$300,000 project will support pre-fire fuel management treatments essential to reducing the potential for uncontrollable wildfires while simultaneously restoring habitat for the endangered Karner blue butterfly and other rare species.



**VIP visit.** In late May, Senator Michelle Hinchey (New York State 46th Senate District) and her Chief of Staff, Leah Goldman visited the preserve. They encountered multiple Karner blue butterflies and acres of wild blue lupine in peak bloom. The tour showcased multiple types of habitat management including a prescribed burn in March. We thank the Senator for her support of our annual appropriation in the Environmental Protection Fund and her active participation as a member of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee.

### In Our Community...

**Lending a helping hand.** Our Fire Manager joined a NYSDEC western wildfire crew in 2021, assisting with the suppression of the 26,797-acre Greenwood Fire in Superior National Forest in northern Minnesota.



Our fire management staff also joined the Guilderland Fire Department for a fun community event at the Willow Street - Great Dune Trailhead, lead a fire ecology hike for the New York State Master Teachers program and were joined by Smokey Bear and NYSDEC Forest Rangers to celebrate Smokey Bear Day at the Discovery Center.





**‘Stay Connected from Home’ series.** To engage and interact with volunteers during the pandemic, our staff offered volunteer-exclusive Zoom presentations. Including presentations from all departments on topics that varied from ecosystem restoration to travel experiences from around the world.

**Pine Bush Perspectives: A juried photo exhibit now in its eighth year.** The Pine Bush Perspectives juried photo exhibit has become a much-anticipated event for our staff and community alike. This year’s exhibit contained 34 photographs submitted by visitors to the preserve. The exhibit ran from December 3, 2021, through March 1, 2022, and was sponsored by the Friends of the Pine Bush Community. *Below: Silently Watching Me by Justin Higgins*



**School programs.** Our school programs experienced a big transition this year, shifting from almost entirely virtual online programs at the start of 2021 to more and more in-person programs at the start of 2022. We are grateful for the opportunity to connect with students whether through Google Classroom or here on the trails of the Pine Bush Preserve and look forward to a busy spring of school programs.

**Teen Science Café.** The Fall 2021 - Spring 2022 Teen Science Café season was a great success. Ten volunteer teen leaders, all local students in grades 9-12, worked together to plan and host multiple virtual social events for teens featuring scientists from the Capital District area. Teen Science Café programs are free and fun programs for teens, by teens that explore a variety of science topics.

## Visit the Pine Bush...



**New trail bridge completed.** A new 46’ long trail bridge in the Great Dune region of the preserve is now open for public use. The bridge re-routes the great dune yellow trail to avoid the power line right of way and makes use of the historic palatine road. From the bridge, users can observe an old stone curtain wall, a remnant of the bridge that had historically been in the same location.

**Discovery Center re-opens to full hours.** After a period of limited hours, the Discovery Center resumed our normal operating hours in February 2022, and is once again open to the public seven days a week. Many of our exhibits closed during the pandemic are gradually reopening for visitors to come and explore.



**Public programs.** Over the past year, education staff led a variety of programs, both online and in person, introducing visitors to the wonders of the Pine Bush. From Naturalist Walks to Sunset Hikes, Winter Twig ID to Karner blue butterfly walks, new and returning visitors discovered something new about the Pine Bush. We were excited to collaborate with partners on programming over the past year including the Albany Institute of History and Art and Sandra Walck Garden Design.

## On the Ground...

**Fire management report.** Our professionally trained staff, along with seasonal fire technicians, volunteers, and partners applied prescribed fire to 294 acres through 14 operations in 2021. Our staff also assisted partners with 246 acres of prescribed fire on their properties, including NYSDEC (Three Rivers Wildlife Management Area, Rush Oak Openings Unique Area, Rocky Point State Forest, Long Island State Pine Barrens Preserve, the Louise E. Kier Wildlife Management Area), and US Department of Interior; National Park Service (Saratoga National Historical Park, Gettysburg National Military Park).



**Planting habitat in the “core” of the preserve.** Another 15 acres of habitat were planted in the spring of 2021 in the center of the preserve along Route 155. Five small sites, surrounded by high quality pine barrens (in addition to roads, businesses and houses) were planted with wild blue lupine, native grasses and native wildflowers.

**Annual seed collection.** Seasonal and permanent staff collected more bush clover and horsemint seed than ever before during 2021. It was a good seed year, and stocks were replenished that had gotten low with the lack of seed collection during 2020’s COVID-19 challenges.



Invasive plant removal completed for another season. Our seasonal staff and outside contractors traveled on foot across over 1,200 acres (!) of the preserve, cutting and treating invasive plants. This work started in September 2021

and was completed in January 2022. Primarily focused on black locust and aspen, they also treated the occasional burning bush, tree-of-heaven, and Norway maple. Each year the preserve is becoming more and more free of these invasive plants.

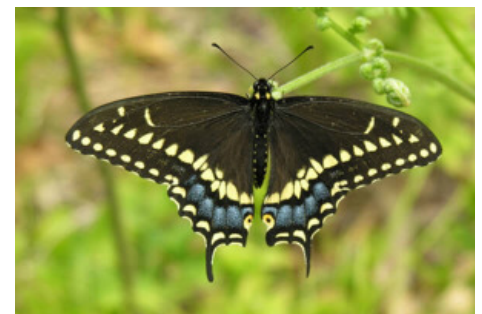
## Our Experts...

**Commission science staff help us manage the preserve and engage with our community.** Science staff provided peers, partners, and community members numerous opportunities to learn about science in the preserve. Venues included, a virtual Northeast Natural History Conference, science lectures, numerous university programs and field trips, and online interactives.

**Professional training.** We hosted training for 87 wildland firefighters in the spring of 2021. The preserve was again the location for the NYSDEC Region 4 Annual Fireline Refresher. With 68 people, this was the largest annual fireline refresher we have hosted to date. We also worked with NYSDEC Forest Rangers to provide the introduction to wildland firefighting class.

**Our incredible volunteers.** Preserve staff virtually trained many new community science volunteers. These community scientists worked on a variety of projects, following survey protocols for data collection. We are grateful for the many hours and collective data that community science volunteers give to the preserve!

Volunteer naturalists continued to patrol the preserve trails throughout the pandemic, interacting with visitors in a friendly educational capacity, while also maintaining social-distancing guidelines. Their engagement with the public helps to provide information on Pine Bush ecology, management, history, and rules and regulations. These volunteers also report trail conditions and wildlife sightings. We thank the volunteer naturalists for their continued dedication and time spent on the trails.



**New volunteer groups.** In July, volunteer community scientists independently observed and photographed preserve butterflies to contribute data to the 2021 National Butterfly Count. Likewise, we hosted four Discovery Center volunteer gardening opportunities during July and August. Participating volunteers helped to maintain the grounds by assisting with projects such as weeding, trimming, and litter clean-up. Finally, a new group of volunteer docents attended training and mentoring sessions over the summer months. These volunteers serve as a friendly greeters and informal educators in our Center. We are pleased to offer a range of volunteer opportunities and extend gratitude to all new and existing volunteers. Their contributions and support are invaluable.



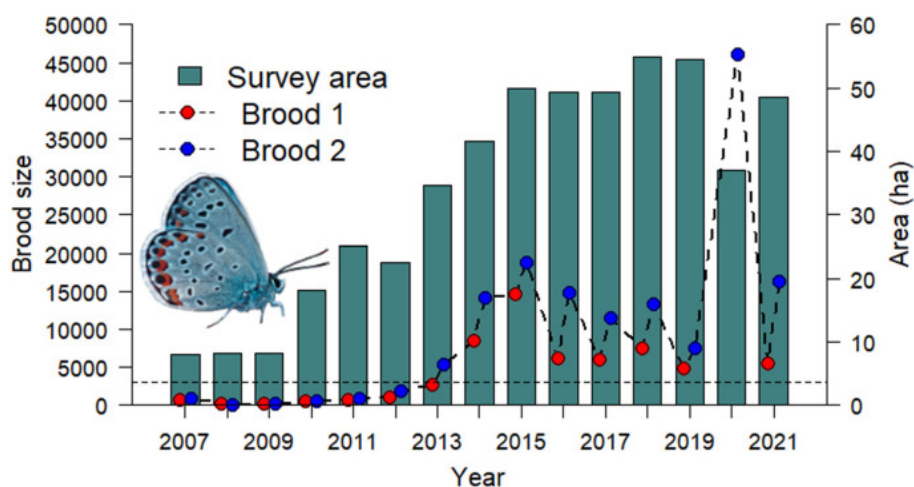
Photo by Kerrie Wolf-Piechota

## Latest Research...

**Bird research continues to help us understand the impacts of preserve management.** In 2021 our science staff and volunteers banded 801 individual birds. Since 2012 we have banded more than 10,000 birds, tracking population dynamics, movement patterns and survival of many species that depend on the globally rare pitch pine-scrub oak barrens.



**Federal Karner Blue Butterfly Recovery Plan Update.** As a result of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve's successful Karner blue butterfly recovery, our staff will be working with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to help review and update the Federal Recovery Plan for the species. *Fig. 1 Below*



For the ninth consecutive year, Karner blue populations remained high; estimated sizes of the first and second broods in 2021 were about 5600 and 16400 butterflies, respectively (Fig. 1).

# Financial Highlights

Condensed Statement of Activities  
(For Year Ended March 31, 2022)

## Revenues, Gains & Other Support

Government Grants	\$ 2,835,463
Mitigation Revenue	\$ 121,550
Lease Revenue	\$ 181,688
Investment Income	\$ 44,342
Contribution Revenue	\$ 82,226
Program/Other Revenue	\$ 19,145
<b>Total Revenues, Gains and Other Support</b>	<b>\$ 3,284,414</b>

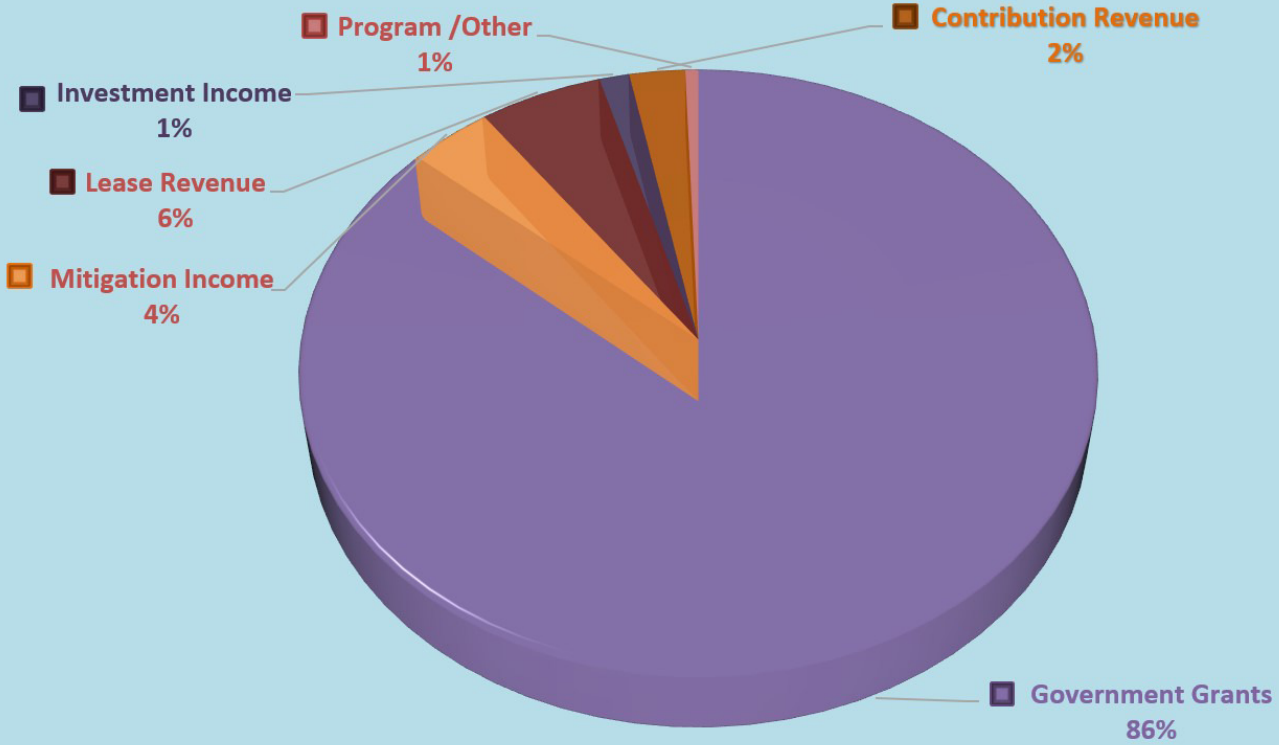
## Expenses

Personnel and Administrative	\$ 2,901,813
Contract and Professional Fees	\$ 623,978
Conservation and Programs	\$ 400,932
Depreciation Expense	\$ 275,463
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 4,202,186</b>
Change in Net Assets	\$ 917,772
PLUS: Net Assets at Beginning of Year	\$ 7,791,198
<b>Net Assets at End of Year</b>	<b>\$ 6,873,426</b>

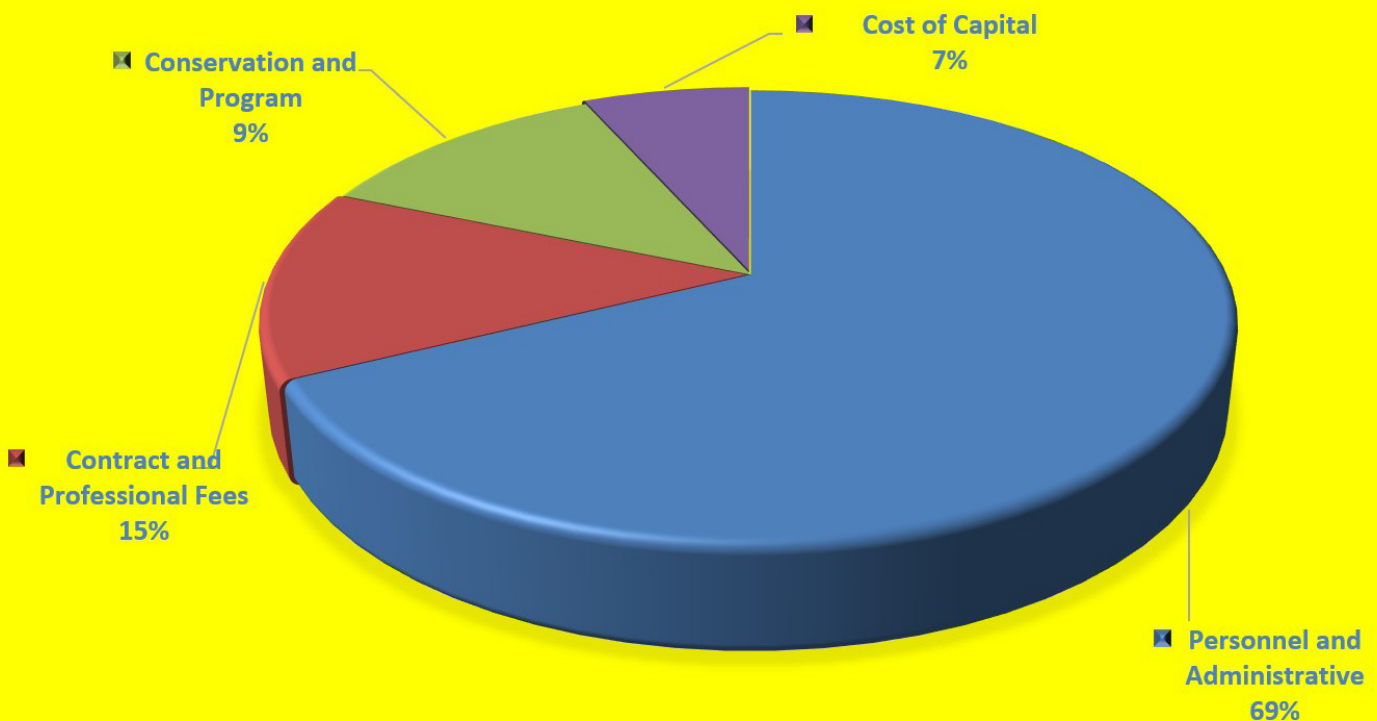
# Financial Highlights

Revenue and Expenses  
(For Year Ended March 31, 2022)

## REVENUE BY SOURCE



## EXPENSES BY SOURCE





# Become a Member of Our Community

## Get Involved

We have many easy ways that you can connect with us. The Discovery Center offers many opportunities through programs, special events and exhibits. You can participate in our community by submitting your Pine Bush story on our website or to our Pine Bush Perspectives Photo Exhibit or by making a video for the Karner Clips Challenge. You can help monitor rare species and study habitat quality. As a Preserve Naturalist you can also work to make the preserve safe and enjoyable for all who visit and live here.

Visit the Commission website, [AlbanyPineBush.org](http://AlbanyPineBush.org) for ways you can join the Pine Bush community.

*Photo above by: Krishna Hill*

## Support

The Commission is working to build broad-based, sustained local support for preserve protection and management. Supporters active in preserve research and management through community science and attending presentations reinforce the APBPC brand as *Globally-Rare, Nationally Significant, and Locally Distinct*. They help to further establish its position as the place with which to affiliate for those interested in conservation science, ecology, and natural history.

Pine Bush enthusiasts can show support by signing up for email updates on [AlbanyPineBush.org](http://AlbanyPineBush.org), and liking the preserve on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

*Photo above by: Daniel Steen*

## Our Friends

Friends of the Pine Bush Community, Inc. is a 501(c)3 organization formed for the charitable and educational purpose of supporting the activities of the Commission. The Friends work cooperatively with Commission staff to add additional land to the preserve, further conservation and education within the preserve, especially through organized activities and programs at the Discovery Center.

Supporters can join or donate by picking up a form at the Discovery Center or through [PineBushFriends.org](http://PineBushFriends.org).

*Photo above by: Krishna Hill*





Photo by Liz Ricci

## Albany Pine Bush Preserve Current Staff

Lisa Anthony  
*Director of Finance & Operations*  
Serving since: 2011

Tyler Briggs  
*Fire Manager*  
Serving since: 2012

Steven Campbell  
*Conservation Biologist*  
Serving since: 2012

Jacqueline Citriniti  
*Lead Educator*  
Serving since: 2008

Wendy Craney  
*Communications Director*  
Serving since: 1995

Amanda Dillon  
*Field Ecologist & Entomologist*  
Serving since: 2011

India Futterman  
*Science Education Specialist*  
Serving since: 2020

Neil Gifford  
*Conservation Director*  
Serving since: 1997

Blake Hastie-Etchison  
*Discovery Center Manager*  
Serving since: 2008

Christopher Hawver  
*Executive Director*  
Serving since: 1993

Joel Hecht  
*Stewardship Director*  
Serving since: 1994

Jesse Hoffman  
*Preserve Steward & Botanist*  
Serving since: 2008

Erin Kinal  
*Education Program Director*  
Serving since: 1998

Elizabeth MacCallum  
*Outreach & Volunteer Coordinator*  
Serving since: 2022

Patricia McLaughlin  
*Office Manager*  
Serving since: 2017

Sara Poggi-Decker  
*Education Program Manager*  
Serving since: 2011

Victoria Stoodley  
*Visitor Services Specialist*  
Serving since: 2015

*Visitor Services Associates*  
John Loz Serving since: 2020  
Sarah Reilly Serving since: 2017  
Carol Seniw Serving since: 2021

### Contact Us

**Albany Pine Bush  
Preserve Commission**  
195 New Karner Road, Suite 1  
Albany, NY 12205  
(518) 456-0655  
info@albanypinebush.org  
**AlbanyPineBush.org**

Go to  
AlbanyPineBush.org/visit-us  
for Discovery Center hours,  
schedule of events and  
directions.





*Photo by Ryan Grennan*



PRESERVE COMMISSION

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