

Annual Report of the



2017-2018

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 Alan Schroeder

Dear friends,
The Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission (APBPC) is pleased to present our Annual Report for fiscal year 2017-2018. It highlights our activities from April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018 and provides a snapshot of some of the ways we both protect and manage the 3,300-acre Albany Pine Bush Preserve and operate the Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center (DC) sponsored by Trustco.

You can experience why the Pine Bush is Globally Rare, Nationally Significant and Locally Distinct every day of the year. The preserve hosts the best example of a northeastern interior pine barrens in the world. It is the largest open space area in New York's Capital Region. As a fire-dependent ecosystem, it provides habitat for many plants and animals and is home to 76 New York State-designated wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need, including the state and federally endangered Karner blue butterfly. 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, snowshoeing, horseback riding, mountain biking, hunting, fishing and paddling.

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.

The Commission is public-private partnership consisting of a board of state, municipal and private members that oversee a dedicated and passionate group of employees and volunteers who support and manage the preserve and Discovery Center year 'round. Receiving over 75,000 visitors annually, the preserve is a National Natural Landmark, Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Site, New York State Unique Area, Bird Conservation Area and National Audubon Society Important Bird Area.

How can you show your support? Visit the preserve and enjoy this beautiful habitat, come to the Discovery Center and attend an education program, join or donate to the Friends of the Pine Bush Community, work with our staff and volunteer as a citizen scientist or at the Discovery Center, 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,

Keith Goertz
Board Chair
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Director, Region 4

Christopher A. Hawver
Executive Director
Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission

Background and Mission

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 76 wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The Albany Pine Bush Preserve consists of 3,300 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 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
Policy Director
The Nature Conservancy
in New York



Rose Harvey
Commissioner,
NYS Office of Parks
Recreation and
Historic Preservation



Hon. Peter Barber
Supervisor
Town of Guilderland



Hon. Paula A. Mahan
Supervisor
Town of Colonie

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



Keith Goertz
Director, Region 4
NYS Department of
Environmental
Conservation



Hon. Daniel P. McCoy
Executive
Albany County





Project and Programmatic Highlights

Big news in the Pine Bush...

Prairie warblers during the non-breeding season. Science staff continued to collaborate with scientists at University of Massachusetts at Amherst and US Forest Service Northeast Research Station on a project to understand the ecology of prairie warblers during the eight months of the year when they are not on the breeding grounds. The data suggest our prairie warblers winter on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. It appears most individuals took about two months to reach these locations in the fall of 2016, but they completed the return spring 2017 trip in about two weeks. Most individuals moved south along the eastern US to the southern tip of Florida before crossing the ocean to Cuba and then to Haiti and Dominican Republic and returned along the same path.



New kiosks installed at 12 trailheads. Brand new kiosks and signage have been designed, constructed, and installed throughout the preserve (*photo lower left*). This much needed upgrade replaced our aging infrastructure with new, state of the art structures. The kiosk size has been expanded in order to incorporate space for a large trail map at each trailhead as well as informative educational signage, interactive trail book displays, and a means of communication with the public via magnetic boards and a comment box. The kiosks have three panels and present visitor information in a new and fresh way, helping visitors get oriented and understand some of the things that make the Albany Pine Bush Preserve unique and interesting.

Steven J. Pyne. Our staff had the honor-of-a-lifetime when we were asked to host a visit by Stephen J. Pyne. Dr. Pyne has written over 30 books, mostly on the history and management of wildland fire in the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Europe. Currently a Regents Professor at the Arizona State University School of Life Sciences, Dr. Pyne visited the preserve

conducting research for his latest book exploring contemporary wildland fire (1960-present) around the nation; the latest volume will focus on the northeastern U.S. and include an essay about our fire management program.

Photo below: Fire Management & GIS Specialist, Tyler Briggs, and Arizona State University Regents Professor, Dr. Stephen Pyne, tour a recent burn in the preserve.



Getting Involved...

Chat with Staff. This new event hosted by our Directors Team gives us an opportunity to meet our neighbors and hear their questions, ideas and thoughts on any aspect of living next door to us. These opportunities were very insightful and have covered topics including preserve restoration, boundary encroachments and suggested improvements to the Discovery Center and grounds.

Promoting the Albany Pine Bush. We continue to reach out to the Capital District and beyond in many different ways to convey the message of our globally rare, nationally significant, and locally distinct destination. We participated in many community events and partnerships including: Empire State Parks and Trail Day, Girls STEM Day at UAlbany, the Mohawk Hudson Watershed Symposium, St. Rose College Community Partnership Collaboration, Town of Colonie Family Fair, The Albany Capital Center Opening, Department of Transportation Employee Community Information Fair, Town of Colonie Conservation Day, Excelsior College Community Information Day, the Pine Bush Neighborhood Association Annual Meeting and the Albany Chamber of Commerce Women of Excellence festivities. We also assisted with the Friends of the Pine Bush Community annual meeting and are active Ambassadors with the Guilderland Chamber of Commerce. This is a result of direction provided by the Vision Strategy and Audience Development Plan.

In Our Community...

Students learn about the Pine Bush. Our Education staff worked with many schools over the past year, bringing learning standards to life in the preserve. Students ages pre-K through college participated in programs including Discover the Pine Bush (*photo below*), Habitat Watch, Help a Habitat, Student Scientists and more!



Shop local. We have added several new, locally sourced items to our gift shop, including pottery, jewelry, artists' prints and posters, as well as new wooden toys.

New website creation. Our website team was hard at work in 2017 taking inventory of the current website, creating a new version of the site's organization, eliminating redundancies, putting like content together and making suggestions on labels, general navigation structure and key wayfinding devices. The team

worked on getting to the essence of our mission and personality, visually as well as in words. The new site will offer constituents many new ways to engage with us including sharing their Pine Bush stories and sharing programs and photos with friends on social media.



Assisting partners. Our fire crew assisted regional partners, including the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Park Service, USDA Plant Materials Center, NYSDEC, Nantucket Land Bank (*photo above*), NYS Office of Parks and Historical Preservation and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) with nine (9) controlled burns totaling 656 acres in 2017. These collaborations benefit regional wildfire risk reduction and biodiversity conservation, and our own prescribed fire program since all of these partners assisted us with prescribed fires.



Help A Habitat Program



Federal grant funding. With the support of the NYSDEC, our fire management program was awarded \$160,000 in 2017 from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service, Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant, to assist with fuel reduction and fire management costs in the preserve.

Visit the Pine Bush...

New at the Discovery Center. The addition of a newly designed “Tell Me A Story” exhibit to the Discovery Center was a great success. A team of volunteers, board members and staff worked with multiple contractors finding solutions to the nonoperational original exhibit while maintaining the original intent of the exhibit. The new design opens up future design possibilities for the exhibit space as well as paves the way for other needed exhibit upgrades in the Discovery Center. Between visitors and program participants our exhibits are used by over 25,000 people per year and regular upgrades are necessary to keep our

visitors engaged and exhibit parts functioning.

Exceptional programming. Total attendance at our public programs exceeded 3,000. Popular public programs included Snakes in the Albany Pine Bush, Karner Kids film festival kickoff and film making workshops, Fox Trot, Winter’s Eve Nature Journaling and Night at the Discovery Center. The Night at the DC was a free evening program with games, crafts, hikes, historic reenactors, and costumed staff and volunteers that helped bring exhibits to life. This program alone brought in nearly 200 guests!

New Truax Trail Barrens. Over the past seven (7) years we have been steadily implementing the preserve’s Resource Protection and Visitor Experience Vision. Part of this plan is to open some new trails and close others. A section of new trail opened late in December north of Kings Road in a region recently named the Truax Trail Barrens. This is a through trail (not a loop)

that connects Karner Barrens at the Discovery Center to the Kings Highway Barrens to the west. It also connects to a new trailhead on Kings Road (#12). Portions of the trail meander through high quality pine barrens, while some parts go through a black locust forest that will be removed and restored within the next 3-5 years.



Happening on the ground...

Turning forests back into pine barrens on 260 acres. In the absence of regular fires many acres of the Pine Bush have succumbed to succession and are growing into forests. Thinning of the forest trees was the goal on 260 acres and the effect was dramatic. Pine barrens seemed to “pop” out of the forest as thousands of trees were removed and the landscape was opened up to look similar to what it looked like a century ago. *Photo above.*

Keeping up with invasive species.

Wildlife habitat restoration efforts in the preserve continues until the snow flies. Most of our autumn season focused on eliminating invasive plants in the preserve. The primary invasive plant, the black locust tree, is benefiting from the more open, sunny landscape that is being created in more and more parts of the preserve as the pine barrens are restored. Contracted and seasonal pine bush crews eliminate these resprouting locust trees along with other invasive plants from the months of September through December, allowing the native plants to thrive once again.

Prescribed fire. We conducted 13 controlled burns totaling 181 acres in 2017. Several regional partners assisted us for the burns (USFWS, TNC, Stanford Heights FD and NYSDEC) in addition to our staff and volunteers. *Photo below.*

Our experts...

We hosted four Environmental Education Interns. Our interns are students from local colleges who participate in many aspects of the Education Department's work including leading visitors in interpretive experiences,

participating in planning for new programs, and contributing new ideas.

We had a total of 13 active Volunteer Naturalists. These volunteers hiked in the preserve, greeted visitors, and submitted their observations, contributing a combined 159 volunteer hours. They collectively encountered more than 700 visitors, and greeted or had conversations with 63% of those. Volunteers contribute to the work of the Education Department in other ways including as Volunteer Docents, Junior Docents, Program Assistants and Discovery Center volunteers. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all who share their time, talent and energy to help raise awareness of the Albany Pine Bush!

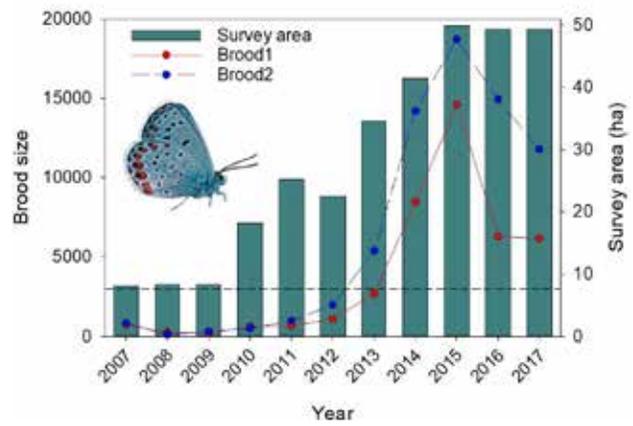
Our prescribed fire expertise. As a member of the North Atlantic Fire Science Exchange (NAFSE) our staff had the opportunity to share our experience with fire ecology and fire management as a guest lecturer at a several workshops, field trips and webinars. We also cohosted a 3-day NAFSE, Fire and Fuels Monitoring Workshop. These

events provide us with unique opportunities to export our expert knowledge while offering staff important professional development opportunities in wildland fire science and management.



Workshop for the birds. Our Science staff hosted a 2-day advanced bird banding workshop at the Discovery Center in May 2017. State Ornithologist for the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MADFW), Andrew Vitz, PhD helped lead the workshop. The class of 14 included our staff and volunteers, and several NYSDEC Wildlife Technicians. The training was a refresher for our science staff; they captured and processed 1,791 birds in 2017, with 1,477 new birds banded and 314 previously banded birds recaptured. *Photo above: Dr. Vitz, right, and workshop participants examine molt limits on a second-year male indigo bunting.*





Fire Training. We partnered with NYSDEC Region 4 Forest Rangers to host three trainings in 2017. Including two annual fireline refreshers certifying 106 people (the largest number by any region in NYS). We held an introduction to wildland firefighting certification and our fire and stewardship crew also participated in NYSDEC/ State Police Helicopter Bucket Training and participated in the NY Long Island Incident Management Academy.

Wildfire suppression. Two of our staff joined the New York State wildfire crew on several out-of-state fire assignments in 2017. Staff assisted with the 26,000 acre ‘Sunrise Fire’ in Montana in July, the 8,100 acres ‘Gibraltar Ridge Fire’ in Montana in August, and the 38,807 acre ‘Tubbs and Nuns Fires’ in Santa Rosa, California in October. These deployments help protect lives and property from uncontrolled wildfires and offer staff truly unique real-world training opportunities that help them manage fire in the preserve.

Photo below: NYSDEC Crew #2



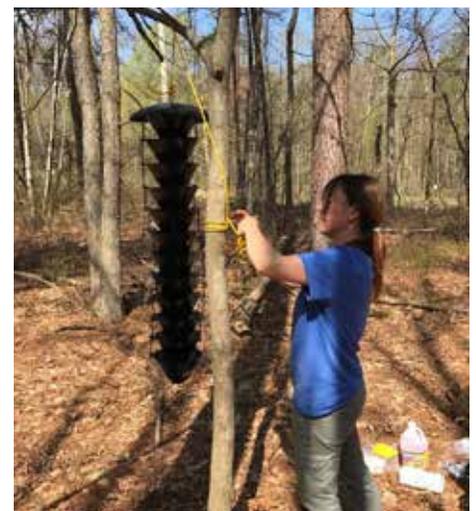
Our latest research...

Endangered Karner blue butterfly numbers remained high in 2017. The estimated sizes of the first and second broods in 2017 were 6,170 and 11,780 butterflies, respectively (*Figure above*). Compared to the previous year’s estimates, these brood sizes represent a 2% decrease for the first brood and a 21% decrease for the second brood. This marks the fifth consecutive year that the population exceeded the recovery threshold established by the USFWS (i.e., 3,000 adults in either the first or second brood) and the fourth time it exceeded the population target set by our own APBPC population targets (7,640 adults). It is worth noting that these estimates are conservative because we did not sample all of the sites in the preserve where Karner blue butterflies are known to occur.

Pollinator planning workshop. The NY Natural Heritage Program and the NYSDEC organized a workshop as part of creating a pollinator conservation plan for New York State. The class came to the Albany Pine Bush to sample bees and participants were impressed with the quality of our habitat and its potential for hosting rare bee species.

Beetle monitoring in cooperation with NYSDEC. We teamed up with the NYSDEC to document the community of native pine engraver beetles in the preserve and search for the southern pine beetle (SPB). SPB is a southern US native that has spread north as a result of climate change. SPB is killing pitch pine stands in the New Jersey Pinelands and Long Island (NY) Central Pine Barrens; it has been documented as far north as Ulster County (NY) and western Massachusetts. Research shows improving forest health by thinning and burning pitch pine stands increases resistance to SPB. Traps were set in several sites that have received various types of management including prescribed fire and forest thinning.

Photo below: NYSDEC Forest Health Research Scientist, Jessica Cancelliere, installs a pheromone baited funnel trap in the preserve.



Financial Highlights

Condensed Statement of Activities
(For Year Ended March 31, 2018)

Revenues, Gains and Other Support

Government Grants	\$ 2,877,662
Mitigation Revenue	\$ 233,076
Lease Revenue	\$ 171,628
Investment Income	\$ 201,636
Contribution Revenue	\$ 71,804
Program/Other Revenue	\$ 34,043
Total Revenues, Gains and Other Support	\$ 3,589,849

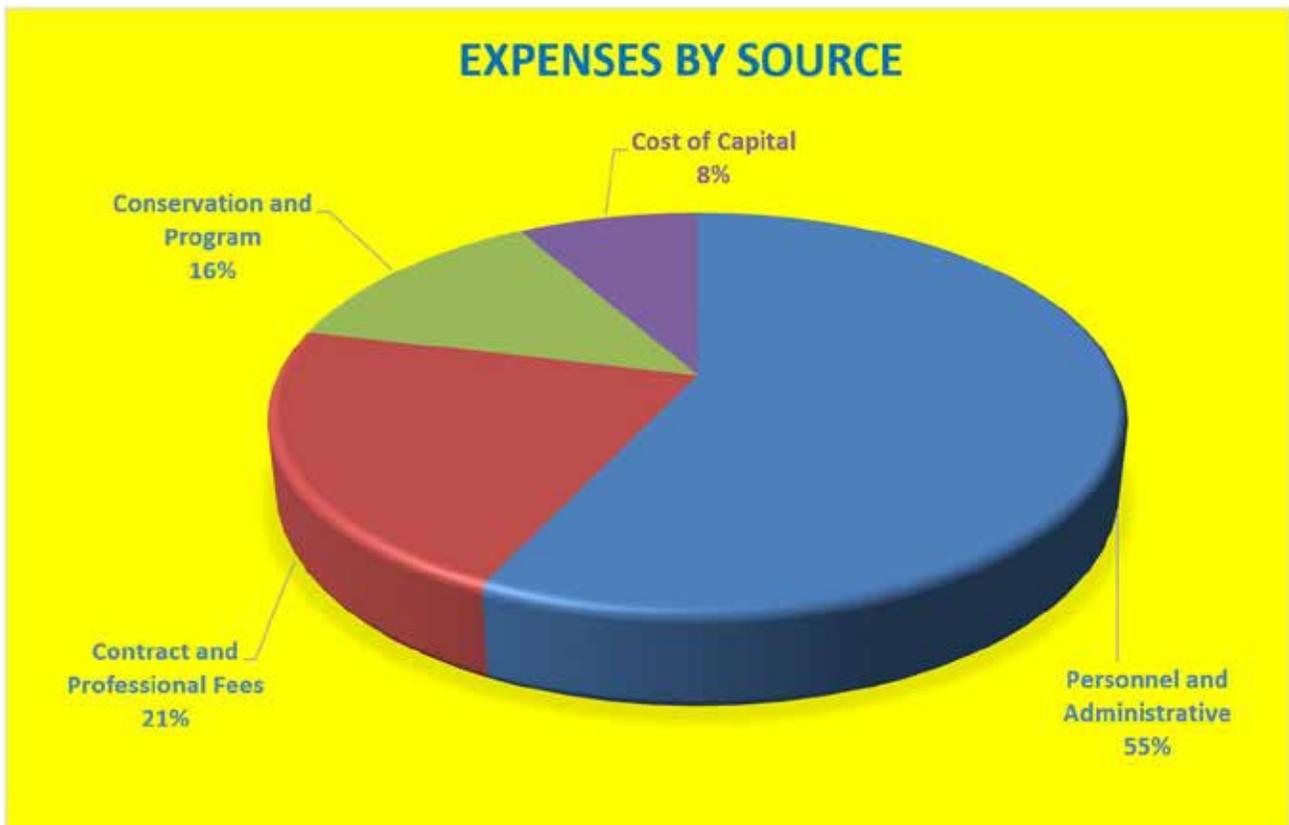
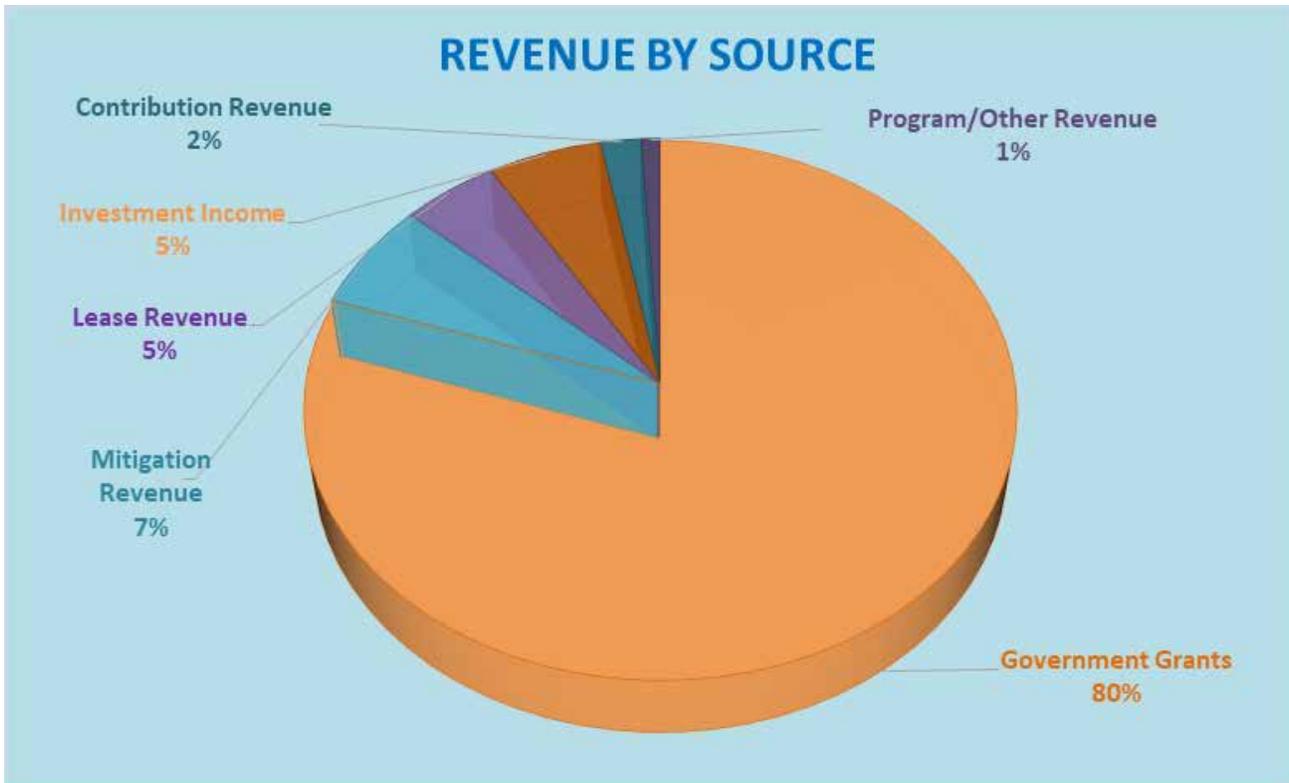
Expenses

Personnel and Administrative	\$ 1,865,430
Contract and Professional Fees	\$ 720,446
Conservation and Programs	\$ 539,187
Cost of Capital	\$ 253,583

Total Expenses	\$ 3,378,646
Change in Net Assets	\$ 211,203
PLUS: Net Assets at Beginning of Year	\$11,508,079
Net Assets at End of Year	\$11,719,282

Financial Highlights

Revenue and Expenses
(For Year Ended March 31, 2018)





How can I get involved?

Volunteer

With the help of volunteer docents and educators, the Discovery Center offers many opportunities through programs and exhibit interpretation about the natural and cultural history of the Pine Bush. The Pine Bush also provides hundreds of volunteers and partners with rewarding opportunities for hands-on conservation work. Volunteer researchers help monitor rare species and study habitat quality. Through boundary posting, trail clearing, habitat restoration and interpretive projects, volunteers are also working to make the preserve safe and enjoyable for all who visit and live here.

Visit the Commission website, AlbanyPineBush.org, and click on Events Calendar for current volunteer opportunities.

Through knowledge, participation and a show of 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 citizen 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, and liking the preserve on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Friends of the Pine Bush Community

Friends of the Pine Bush Community, Inc. is a 501(c)3 membership 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 become a member by picking up a membership form at the Discovery Center or through PineBushFriends.org.





Photo by Elise Josee Nigro

Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission

Current Staff

Lisa Anthony
Director of Finance & Operations

Grace Barber
Outreach Coordinator

Tyler Briggs
Fire Management & GIS Specialist

Steven Campbell
Conservation Biologist

Jacqueline Citriniti
Lead Educator

Wendy Craney
Communications Director

Amanda Dillon
Field Ecologist & Entomologist

Blake Hastie-Etchison
Discovery Center Manager

Neil Gifford
Conservation Director

Christopher Hawver
Executive Director

Joel Hecht
Stewardship Director

Jesse Hoffman
Preserve Steward & Botanist

Erin Kinal
Education Program Director

Patricia McLaughlin
Office Manager

Sara Poggi-Decker
Education Program Manager

Victoria Stoodley
Visitor Services Specialist

Visitor Services Associates

Ashley Ableman
Courtney Clickner
Jodi Nash
Sarah Reilly

Contact Us

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

The Discovery Center is open
DAILY weekdays 9AM-4PM
and weekends 10AM-4PM.
Closed Thanksgiving,
Christmas Eve, Christmas Day
and New Year's Day.





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