

Save the Pine Bush

February Activities

02/17 • 33 Central Avenue, Albany, NY 12210 • email pinebush@mac.com • phone 518-462-0891 • <http://www.savethepinebush.org>

Vegetarian/Vegan Dinner
Wednesday, February 15, 2017, 6:00 p.m.

Chris Hawver

**Executive Director of the Albany Pine Bush
Preserve Commission**

will speak about

The Pine Bush Today

Chris Hawver will give an overview of the many research and educational projects in the Pine Bush being sponsored by the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission. And, in honor of Save the Pine Bush's 39th year, Chris will speak about what it is like to work with a group like SPB. Chris will also briefly speak about the possible effects of climate change on the Pine Bush, on new land acquisitions made in the past few years, and what he sees for the future of the Pine Bush.

At the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street (people with cars can park in the lot near the door). All-you-can-eat dinner, with vegetarian and vegan options. We will be trying out some new menus - email if you have questions. . Only \$12 for adults, \$6 for students, and \$2 for children. People who make reservations are served first. For reservations, please leave a message for Rezsine Adams at 462-0891 or email pinebush@mac.com.

**Interested people are welcome to attend the program beginning at 7:00
for which there is no charge.**

Winter Pine Bush Outing!
Sunday afternoon, February 26 at 1 PM
**Meet at Pine Bush Discovery Center parking lot, east side of
Route 155, opposite Old State Road.**

For GPS - 195 New Karner Road, Albany NY 12205
For more information, contact Andy Arthur at 281- 9873 or andy@andyarthur.org

Cross country ski or hike — depending on the weather! The Pine Bush is beautiful in the winter. Enjoy the outdoors, the beauty of the Pine Bush, all with an experienced hike leader, Andy Arthur.

Note: Please wear appropriate protective clothing for the danger of ticks, bring deer or insect repellent to use before beginning the walk. Wear long pants, long sleeves, high boots or tuck pants in socks. Please stick to middle of paths as much as possible. Special garden gaiters can be worn. Check carefully for ticks right after the walk and again as soon as you get home. We want everyone to be safe as you enjoy the outdoors!

www.savethepinebush.org

Reprinted from the Altamont Enterprise

New plans for young forests

by H. Rose Schneider

Prescribed burns are scheduled every year at the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, once every 10 years for each site. They promote the health of the preserve habitat.

ALBANY COUNTY — It may seem counterintuitive, but the state Department of Environmental Conservation is looking to remove trees in various protected areas across New York State.

A plan by the DEC includes 10-year plans for two protected areas in Albany County. The Louise E. Keir Wildlife Management Area is a 187-acre area in the town of Coeymans, and features an uncommon, fire-dependent habitat — a pitch pine-oak-heath rocky summit. The Margaret Burke Wildlife Management Area is a 245-acre habitat in the town of Knox. Both have suffered from a decline in young forest habitat.

The DEC’s Young Forest Initiative, began in 2014, and has a goal of establish-

ing at least 10 percent of each Wildlife Management Area, or WMA, with young forest habitats. In the early 1900s, New York had more farmland than forest, but this has shifted — over half of the state has forests that are moving toward more mature trees. Many species are in decline because they live all or part of their lives in young forest habitats.

Species in trouble include birds like the ruffed grouse, American woodcock, and scarlet tanager; mammals like the New England cottontail; amphibians like the blue-spotted salamander; and insects like the bumblebee and the Karner blue butterfly. In fact, the New England cottontail could become endangered or go extinct, said Rick Georgeson, spokesman for DEC Region 4, if young forests continue to decline.

“Unless we actively create more young forest, many wild creatures — including a host of colorful songbirds — will rarely be seen or heard,” said Georgeson in an email to The Enterprise. “New York will become even more dominated by mature woodlands, affording fewer habitat options for wildlife.”

The decline of young forests is largely manmade, said Neil Gifford, conservation director for the Albany Pine Bush Preserve. Natural disasters like flooding or

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wildfires would, in an underdeveloped area, destroy mature forests and clear the way for young forests to grow, but such natural disaster are currently prevented from damaging habitats.

According to Georgeson, young forests have also declined as human activity like logging and land development has changed over the years, and also as habitats have grown into mature forests.

A young forest habitat is “kind of between a field and forest,” said Gifford. The Pine Bush is home to pitch pines, which are a type of tree that thrives in young forests, and, in order to preserve their habitat, prescribed fires and tree thinning must be conducted.

Gifford said that a prescribed burn is not for every young forest environment, but that the sandy-soil pine barren is a fire-dependent habitat, meaning that fire can stop more aggressive plants from taking over, allowing fire-dependent plant species to flourish after a fire. A prescribed fire is set in the Pine Bush annually, with a burn occurring at a certain site every ten years, said Gifford. Tree thinning also occurs in the preserve, usually before a prescribed burn.

In order to give notice of tree thinning or a prescribed burn, Gifford said that the preserve sends postcards to neighbors and puts up billboards notifying passersby, as well as notices in newspapers.

Louise E. Keir WMA

The Louise E. Keir WMA pitch pine-oak-heath rocky summit community is located in the highest elevations of the area. Considered to be within the state rankings of apparently secure or almost secure, the ecological community is under threat of other trees shading out the pitch pine.

The ranking system ranges from S1 that has five or fewer ecological communities, and S5 that’s demonstrably secure; S3 typically has 21 to to 100 ecological occurrences.

In order to preserve the protected area’s young forests, including the pitch pine’s habitat, tree-thinning has been scheduled under the DEC’s habitat management plan until 2025. This includes clearcutting of white pines and oaks, selective cutting of undesirable species in the scrub-oak forest, and planting pitch-pine seedlings. A prescribed burn could be planned in the pitch pine-oak-heath rocky summit community, if deemed feasible.

A fire plan is currently being drafted by the DEC forest rangers and the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission, said Georgeson. If approved by the DEC, trained crews will conduct prescribed burns using weather conditions, firebreaks — which stop fire from spreading — and other specialized equipment to control the fire.

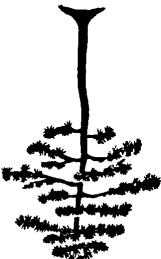
Address Service Requested

Albany, NY 12210

33 Central Avenue

A Project of the Social Justice Center

Save the Pine Bush



In order to discuss the habitat-management plan with the community, the DEC has scheduled a meeting on Jan. 31 at 6:30 p.m. at the Coeymans Hollow Volunteer Fire Company, 1290 State Route 143, Coeymans Hollow. The previous meeting was canceled due to inclement weather.

Margaret Burke WMA

The Margaret Burke WMA currently does not have any young forest habitat. Rather, it contains forest, shrubland, grassland, and wetland. The goal of the habitat management plan is to cultivate 38 acres of young forest in the protected area, or 16 percent of the land. This would decrease the forest from 181 acres to 143 acres, or 74 to 58 percent of the land. Other habitats would not change.

According to Georgeson, a majority of this WMA had land cleared for farming in the 18th and 19th centuries, and a portion was kept as farmland until it was given to the state in 1958. Since then, the fields that grew into young forests have since grown into intermediate-aged and mature forests.

The plan is to restore habitat necessary for foraging, nesting, and brood rearing of bird species like the American woodcock, wild turkey, and ruffed grouse. The American woodcock needs open areas for peenting, a type of mating call; wild turkeys need more open areas for strutting, in which a turkey fans its feathers as a form of courting; and the ruffed grouse needs an area of downed trees for drumming, a noise made from beating wings to assert territory or attract mates.

Up until 2025, the DEC plans to cultivate young forest habitats by clearcutting red and white pines, hardwoods, hemlocks, and invasive species. Natural regeneration is to be allowed to create a young forest habitat. Mowing the grassland habitat is also called for.

In both WMAs, private contractors will conduct timber sales and other forestry management. According to Georgeson, they will follow traditional timber-sale procedures set forth by the DEC. DEC staff may perform some forestry work that is not considered commercially valuable.

Corrected on Jan. 25, 2017: We had initially listed the wrong kind of cottontail rabbit as being a species in trouble; it is the New England cottontail.

Note: The Altamont Enterprise has many excellent stories. I recommend that everyone get an annual subscription. You can buy a print and/or digital subscription.