

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE
MINUTES

A meeting of the Parks and Recreation Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on June 10, 2015 at 12:30 p.m.

Members Present:

Deputy Presiding Officer Jay Schneiderman - Chair
Legislator Kara Hahn - Vice Chair
Legislator Thomas Cilmi
Legislator William Lindsay III
Legislator Kevin McCaffrey

Also in Attendance:

George Nolan - Counsel/Suffolk County Legislature
Jason Richberg - Chief Deputy Clerk/Suffolk County Legislature
Greg Dawson - Commissioner/Suffolk County Department of Parks
Christina DeLisi - Aide to Legislator Schneiderman
Bill Shilling - Aide to Legislator Calarco
John Pavacic - Executive Director/Central Pine Barrens Commission
John Wernet - NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Region 1
Kelly Bennett - Suffolk County Resident
All Other Interested Parties

Minutes Taken By:

Gabrielle Severs - Court Stenographer

Minutes Transcribed By:

Kim Castiglione - Legislative Secretary

*(*The meeting was called to order at 12:37 p.m. *)*

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I'd like to call this meeting of the Parks and Recreation Committee to order this tenth day of June, 2015. All please rise and join us for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator McCaffrey.

Salutation

Okay. We're going to start today with public portion. If you wish to be heard by the committee you need to fill out a yellow card like this one here. You can obtain them at the front table. I have but one card. Each speaker will have three minutes to make their comments known, and the sole speaker today is Kelly Bennett. Miss Bennett, if you'll come forward. If you could start by identifying yourself for our records and then you may begin.

MS. BENNETT:

My name is Kelly Bennett. Good afternoon. I'm here again to voice my concerns regarding Smith's Point Campground and to hear if any of the problems have been rectified. I understand that Legislators Browning and Calarco went there and took pictures and were not at all satisfied with the bathroom conditions. I, as a taxpayer, would like to know what is being done about this.

It's not only the bathrooms that concern me. The campsites themselves are never clean when you pull in. The grass is never cut in the sites. I have to call maintenance to have them come down and do the weed whacking while I am there trying to enjoy my vacation. The fire pits are never cleaned. My husband is always cleaning 100 pounds or more of ash and debris, garbage, out of the fire pits. The dog waste receptacles have not had bags since Memorial Day Weekend, so nobody feels it's necessary to clean up after their pets. The rules in general need to be enforced from rowdiness and way too many cars on campsites, to going the speed limit and going the wrong direction in the campgrounds themselves. Fines needs to be given to the Green Key holder and even some people might need to be ejected.

State parks do not put up with any of this nonsense and they are cleaned regularly with somebody slapping on rubber gloves up to their shoulders and going in there and cleaning the toilets, the walls, scrubbing down the cobwebs out of the corners, and they have to account for what they do.

I'm hoping that these situations will be rectified by the time of my next outing there. I have spent over \$500 this year alone to camp at Smith's Point and would like to enjoy it. And that's what I have to say.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay. Any questions for Miss Bennett? All right. Thank you. You may be seated. Okay. Is there anyone else who wishes to be heard by the committee? Going once, twice, okay, three times. All right. Commissioner, real brief, before we bring Mr. Pavacic up. Maybe we can just address the issue at Smith's Point, hopefully briefly, because we do have a presentation by the Executive Director of the Central Pine Barrens Commission, John Pavacic.

Commissioner, I actually went and visited Smith Point myself on a surprise visit, I didn't tell anybody I was coming. I did go and take a look at all the facilities in question, and I made sure I knocked first. So I actually -- I did see one toilet stall that, in one of the men's bathrooms, that was not operating. I did see quite a bit of graffiti. I did see one shower that had a dripping shower faucet. Other than that, I didn't see kind of the grotesque type of conditions that people had been talking about. I don't know, maybe you had gotten out there or the Parks Department had gotten out there. Do you want to take a moment -- I know I put you on the spot last week on this issue, but have you had a chance to do any follow-up on the campgrounds there?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

I have, and thank you for taking the time to take a visit out there. I was out there -- I guess the last committee meeting was on a Wednesday, I went out there on the following Thursday. I met with the Superintendent, did a physical inspection of the facility myself, and I was out there again the following Saturday.

As far as the -- as far as the I guess the most -- the worst picture that I saw was the urinals, and I know what it looks like, but I just want to show you that what's at the bottom of those urinals is years of scaling and calcium needed to be scraped off with paint scrapers and whatnot, and that has since been done. All of the comfort stations have been power washed. I saw probably the same conditions that you did. Graffiti is an ongoing problem. We take care of it -- we can take care of it when we can.

As far the enforcement, the Rangers have been out there doing full enforcement. I have two letters that I got yesterday, I can share with you, that people think that we're being overly aggressive. There were complaints about Rangers chasing people off of multiple campsites.

I'd like to address the dog issue, the dog waste issue. We do have stanchions out there where we purchased dog waste bags. I think the last time we purchased them it was in the neighborhood of \$17,000. That's really not a good expenditure of our resources, so what we've done in other parks was the maintenance crew had made up posts. The best way to describe them is like a four inch round PVC pipe with very nicely lettered wording sign saying, you know, please donate your used grocery bags for these sites. We use them at Southaven, we use them at Blydenburgh, and I believe we use them at Gardiner, and they're very successful. So we're in the process of taking down the existing dog bag receptacles and putting these things in. Hopefully it will help. Generally if somebody's going to clean up after their dog, you know, they're going to clean up after their dog or they're not. If they're not, they're not, you know, walking a couple of hundred yards to find one of these bags, but hopefully it will help.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Have you gotten work orders for that leaky faucet and the toilet?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Yeah, the work order is done. There are two issues. The original letter said that the shower did not shut off. I did not find that. I found the same thing that you did, that there were some dripping shower heads. The parts are on order. These bathrooms were built in the early 80's, so finding parts is a little bit difficult to do, but they do shut off. The one commode and, again, you know, and you're talking about, I'm counting them, but in those four bathrooms and the ones up by the main pavilion, we probably have 50 or 60 commodes, urinals, toilets. You know, for one of them to be out of service at any given time I don't think is unreasonable. It should be fixed, but the work order was put in. They're waiting for some gasket, but the water was shut off. It was dripping water, not waste as somebody alluded to. It was dripping fresh water, but that's been shut off until they can get to it. So I would imagine by next week it should be -- that one should be repaired.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

And with the dog waste, why are we depending on people to bring in, you know, their grocery bags? Why don't we have bags always available?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Because we spent \$17,000 on them two years ago and they didn't even last the season. We just think that that's an awful lot of money to purchase bags to put in when we can do it with recycled materials.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

But what if people don't bring those bags in? Then we're going to have dog waste everywhere.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

If you go to Gardiner, if you go to Southaven, you will see. People do bring them. I mean, I can't attest to what's going to happen at Smith's Point. If it becomes an issue and you want me to spend the money on those bags, we certainly will. But it's -- they're a lot of money.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

All right. Other questions?

LEG. CILMI:

No, I just don't want them to spend money on bags.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

And again, you know, if somebody is going to clean up after their dog, they'll find a way to clean up after their dog. It's very disrespectful not to do that, but it kind of is what it is. But the Rangers have been out there and they have been enforcing the dog off the leash regulations and the additional cars on the campsites and the noise violation problem.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I did see at least one Ranger when I was there, or Park Police.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Like I said, it's just odd. I got two complaints just yesterday that they were being too --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Aggressive?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

They didn't use the word aggressive. Overly ambitious I think was the word that they used. But, you know, again, we see hundreds of thousands of visitors every year, if not probably close to a million, and we do expect.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay. Legislator Hahn has a question, comment.

LEG. HAHN:

Hi, Commissioner. Thank you for all you do.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Good afternoon.

LEG. HAHN:

So you said that the bathrooms were put in in the early 80's.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Correct.

LEG. HAHN:

So when are we replacing them?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

We have no plan -- I mean, we have no plan in replacing them. We do have money in our capital funds for specifically for Smith's Point. I've had conversations with the Senior Superintendent and the other Superintendent to see if we could do something over the winter months inhouse and replace some of the fixtures and replace some of the guts of the showers and whatnot. But that's an off season thing if we want to spend money in that fashion we can. We have in the past.

LEG. HAHN:

What's the life expectancy of a bathroom?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

You know, when you're down by the water things -- I would imagine they would last a lot longer at a place like in Florida where they are used seven days a week, 365 days a year, but the reality of it is after Columbus Day these things shut down and they're subject to the elements and the saltwater and whatnot. So, I mean, I don't know.

LEG. HAHN:

Right. So to my point, do we have a plan for replacement, because, you know, the pictures I saw, and I'm trying to find them here on my laptop and I can't. You know, there was like a mirror that looked like it was all rusted, the entire mirror. I mean, that's just not acceptable.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Again, you need to take these things into context, and I can go into any park and facility, even the State, with a camera and find things that aren't acceptable. I mean, it is. Like I said, I would welcome to do an inspection of the facility with you or anybody on the board to show the conditions.

And in speaking about Smith's Point, the reason that those mirrors, those type of mirrors are the way they are is because the glass mirrors, the ones you would like to see up there, have been broken in the past. We've got broken glass in the thing so we end up using those stainless steel mirrors, and they are subject to the elements. And I agree with you, they should be changed out every four or five years, and we could certainly do that.

LEG. HAHN:

And so -- I think I must have the Presiding Officer's thing here, because I don't have to push the button.

LEG. CILMI:

Barraga. That's Barraga's thing. He's a special man.

LEG. HAHN:

He is special. Okay. So the other question I had was on maintenance. Were you able to now, because the last committee meeting you weren't able to tell us kind of how many staff you had and when they were there and how often they were cleaning.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Yes. We are still short on our seasonal staff, and that's not a budgetary thing, it's more a function of getting the people on the payroll. We utilize mostly high school and college kids. A lot of them, especially this time of the year, even the high school kids when they sign up they've got graduations and proms and everything, so filling shifts is a little bit difficult. We would generally like to have, and I know it sounds like a lot, but it's not. We would like to have six part-time employees on any given shift. We go from 6:30 in the morning we open up until almost 11:00 at night. We have an outer beach, we have a campground with over 250 campsites, and we have a beach that uses -- that probably accommodates another, you know, 5,000 patrons. They're responsible for emptying the garbage pails up by the main pavilion, the east booth, the campgrounds, the parking lot, and

somewhat the outer beach. So we would like to have five to six on any given time.

Over the Memorial Day weekend I think we had three, and we have a full-time staff there of five, but when you break those guys down to a seven day workweek, again, from 6:30 in the morning until 11:00 at night, you are lucky if you have one or two guys on at any given shift. But that goes get better as the season progresses. Memorial Day, you know, we do have good crowds then, but it's not quite as active until we start to get to the end of June when school lets out, which is when the seasonal kids become more available.

And just to your point, usually on a seven hour shift they'll get to the bathrooms probably twice. There's four bathrooms in the campground and there's a mens and ladies room up at the main pavilion. And depending on how dirty they are and how much use they get, you know. But they get cleaned at least twice on that route. But it can be a good two hours, two and a half hours, before anybody gets there again, so if somebody does something in a restroom, it could look like that depending on when you got there.

LEG. HAHN:

And you have supervisors that are following the high school part-timers?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

We do have full-time supervision. I think I mentioned it at the last meeting. On that particular day, again, I was in the east booth for three hours that day. The Supervisor, we had gotten a lot of complaints about opening up additional access, if you recall, to the outer beach. We went from allowing 250 cars to 500 cars. The Supervisor spent a good part of his day on the beach with the Park Rangers trying to direct traffic to get things flowing the way they need to flow. So that's where he spent a good part of his day, so.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay.

LEG. HAHN:

Sure.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

All right. Seeing no other questions, Commissioner, we'll have you back after the presentation.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

I'll yield the floor to --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

To the former County Park Commissioner. All right, Mr. Pavacic. So John Pavacic is the Executive Director at the Central Pine Barrens Commission. He'll be co-presenting with John Wernet, Supervising Forester with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Region 1 office in Stony Brook. This presentation is concerning the Southern Pine Beetle and the response and management of the Southern Pine Beetle. Thank you, Mr. Pavacic. Legislator Hahn is reminding me that we requested this presentation, so we're certainly happy you're here. As I mentioned before, you're a former Suffolk County Park Commissioner as well. I know you were at the DEC as well. So thanks for taking the time and I'll turn things over to you.

MR. PAVACIC:

Thank you very much for accommodating us today and without further ado. So just to provide you an overview. The Southern Pine Beetle was initially discovered in the fall of last year. It represents a major threat to the forest and woodlands of Long Island and nursery stock and landscaping found

in both private and public properties. Unfortunately, once this beetle infests a tree, the tree will die in only two to four months. We have a consortium of agencies led by DEC and in partnership with the Commission, Federal Government, other State and local agencies, to move aggressively to address the issue using a multi-pronged approach.

The South Pine Beetle, it's important to point out, cannot be completely eradicated. Once it got here, it's here to stay. So we have to learn how to best try to live with this particular issue, and hopefully by combining all of our resources we'll be able to significantly mitigate its impacts.

It's native to the Southern U.S. It's not an invasive species because it is native to the U.S., so that's something I just want to clear up right off the bat. There are other species of beetles, such as the Asian Longhorned Beetle, which from overseas and is an invasive pest. The Pitch Pine, or native pine tree which dominates our force, particularly in the Pine Barrens, is the preferred species. However, this beetle will attack other evergreen species, including the White Pine.

It's our understanding that because of global warming and climate change the Southern Pine Beetle has been allowed to move further north. As you may have heard, extremely cold, subfreezing temperatures will kill the beetle, and we're hoping that this past winter will have significantly knocked it back. We did anecdotally find some evidence that the beetles had been severely killed off in certain locations, but again, the true test of that will be borne out later on as we undergo our monitoring program.

Basically the biology of this is that the beetles, female beetles, initiate the attacks. They go out as sentinels. When they find a suitable host tree they release pheromones, which are basically the insect version of hormones, and attract other beetles to colonize the tree. The beetles drill through the bark and eat the very thin underlying living tissue, the cambium. They basically girdle the tree. The only means by which pines can defend themselves is by releasing an oozing pine sap, also known as pitch, in an attempt to smother and kill the beetle. Very healthy, robust trees can successfully repel an attack, however, most of our Pitch Pine trees are very crowded, and so the individual trees are not able to mount a successful attack.

In addition, the Southern Pine Beetle is also accompanied by a symbiotic fungus called blue stain fungus, which serves as an additional food source for larvae. Unfortunately, this fungus, once introduced into a tree, will also kill Pitch Pine trees, even if there's an insufficient number of Southern Pine Beetles.

The beetles and larvae are dormant during the winter. Generally beetles do not fly when temperatures are below 54 degrees Fahrenheit. They start to emerge when temperatures are sustained above that level. As I mentioned before, subfreezing temperatures can help to kill Southern Pine Beetle. The colder the temperature, the higher the amount of mortality that can be expected.

Here is a picture of the beetle, but don't let this fool you. The beetle is very, very diminutive in size. It's only about the size of a chocolate sprinkle or an uncooked grain of rice. However, they make up for their diminutive size by sheer numbers. The beetles are capable of generating multiple generations in a season, so ten beetles can quickly become a thousand and affect thousands of acres in a single season. As I indicated before, they overcome trees by sheer numbers, and in Jersey they have observed infestations advancing as far as 50 feet per day.

You'll see below a listing of some of the areas where infestations have been found, the Henry's Hollow/Munns Pond County Park area, Hubbard County Park, Shirley, Oakdale, by the Oak Brush Plains, by the Babylon/ Huntington/Islip border, Brookhaven State Park and Fire Island National Seashore. And as I'm sure you read recently in Newsday, they have now been found in Nassau

County. They have also now been found in Connecticut and up in Cape Cod.

So this is what an infestation looks like from the air. You'll see in the middle of the screen a number of yellowed and yellowing trees, or trees turning reddish, and also trees on the left part of the screen, ones that are completely denuded. So that's our best evidence when we are doing reconnaissance that Pitch Pines are being attacked. Again, here's another example of an infestation. This was a picture taken in January of this year. You'll see the yellowed or yellowing trees in the middle in East Quogue.

This is a progression of photos taken over a basically a one year period in a wilderness area of Texas where no control work was undertaken, and you can see in the upper left hand corner how by the time we get to progress to the photo in the lower right, which is August of the following year, the entire area has been overcome and killed by Southern Pine Beetle. This is what they look like from the ground. You'll see both denuded and yellowing and brownish pine trees, and then looking up at the crown, again, this is what the view looks like.

We had infestations at Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge, approximately 200 acres there. This is Munns Pond looking towards the northeast. That's Sunrise Highway in the upper left part of the screen, and you'll see in the middle of the photo the yellowing trees, which are evidence of Pitch Pines being attacked by the beetle. Again, the Henry's Hollow/Munns Pond County Park you can see the areas of yellow trees that, again, are evidence of the attack of the beetle.

This is a meter stick just showing you the size of the beetle, one to three millimeters in size, a very tiny beetle. One of the other ways of identifying the infestation is if you go out to Pitch Pine trees you'll see these globules of dried or drying sap, pine sap, that are either translucent white or reddish in color.

There are other species that also will produce this effect. There is one known as the Black Turpentine Beetle, but one of the ways of distinguishing Black Turpentine from the Southern Pine Beetle is that Southern Pine Beetle will infest the entire trunk of a tree all the way to the crown. You'll see these globules of sap. The Turpentine Beetle is limited more to the lower part of the tree, basically from about eight to ten feet up down to the base. So this is an example. You'll see the little popcorn shaped globules on the trunk of the tree, evidencing that this has been attacked by Southern Pine Beetle.

There are three stages of attack. Fresh attacks, you'll see these globules on the bark but the needles will still be green. Stage two, more advanced when the tree is being girdled. The foliage, the needles start to turn yellow or brown, and adult beetles are still present. And finally stage three, the trees are completely dead and the beetles have all emerged and moved on to other trees.

So the response has been, as I indicated before, multi-agency, multi-pronged and multifaceted. It's DEC, State Parks and the Commission and other involved agencies. We immediately began addressing the issue in the fall of 2014. And you'll see a listing of the agencies involved, both the Regional Office of DEC, Albany Headquarters, the Commission, State Parks, State DOT, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Forest Service, Suffolk County, particularly Suffolk County Parks, and various towns and NGO's.

DEC and the Commission have implemented ICS, the Incident Command System, to organize and manage the response. As folks may or may not know, it's a systematic tool for the command control and coordination of emergency response that provides for a unified, centrally authorized emergency organization. It allows personnel from a wide variety of agencies to speak the same language and to work together to manage an incident or an issue. And we have an organizational chart, which shows the organizational structure of this, which involves both DEC, the Commission

and several of the other agencies. You'll see a number of other agencies that are represented in various locations throughout the organizational structure.

The multiprong approach consists of five main focal points, Aerial Reconnaissance and Ground Surveys, Monitoring and Trapping, Forest Management, Planning and Education and Outreach. In aerial reconnaissance, DEC and Commission staff have conducted multiple flights over the County in airplanes provided by both New York State and Civil Air Patrol. These began late last year and have continued up to the present time, and we are undertaking additional flights as we speak, and these will continue over the next several months.

These are conducted to initially identify and map the infestations using GIS and GPS based software and hardware, and data obtained from these flights are used to generate maps, which then plot all potential Southern Pine Beetle infestation sites. These maps then are used by ground crews to go out and survey these sites.

Ground surveys are very important because the area is identified in the aerial -- in the aeriels there is a ground truth to verify the presence of Southern Pine Beetle and the extent of the infestation. In some situations what may appear to be a Southern Pine Beetle infestation from the air is not -- has been borne out not to be Southern Pine Beetle. It might be Black Turpentine Beetle. And in some cases when it is truly Southern Pine Beetle, we have found in some cases that the infestation has self-extinguished, that it just died out and the beetles did not spread to other areas. So that's why it's important to do this ground survey work so we can prioritize where we're going to focus our resources.

So, as I indicated, folks are going out on ground surveys to confirm presence or absence, more precisely to find the boundaries, record the basal area of the infestation, the amount of square footage of the trees that are actually affected by the infestation, the direction in which the infestation is moving. Just like a wildfire, Southern Pine Beetle infestations move in a particular direction. Record the stages of infestation present, and then other information, such as whether this involves clusters of trees or individual scattered trees. And this is just showing some of the folks who are out there. In the lower left hand corner you have DEC and other agencies; in the upper right we have County Parks and Commission staff also engaging in the ground truthing effort.

The next portion of our response is monitoring and trapping. Multi-baffled traps are hung in various locations to capture Southern Pine Beetles. These have been installed over the last several months. They contain a bait consisting of a combination of Southern Pine Beetle pheromones and natural volatile chemicals exuded by Pitch Pine trees. The beetles are attracted to the bait in the traps and travel through a series of one way baffles. The traps are inspected and emptied once a week, with the trapped insects sent to the DEC lab in Albany for identification and analysis.

And it's important to note the quantity of Southern Pine Beetles in the traps is used to determine the presence or absence. Then, if present, the size of the Southern Pine Beetle population in the area. Other trapped beetles and insects are also identified. Certain species such as Clerid Beetles, a natural predator of Southern Pine Beetle, are tracked to determine their population levels as well. And data obtained are used to predict current and future infestations and high volume infestations known at outbreaks. And here you see folks setting out some traps in the woods.

And then we also engage in monitoring. Infestation sites are visited and monitored to determine trends regarding infestation expansion and direction and response of the forest to Southern Pine Beetle over time. This includes sites where no forest management activities, such as suppression, are undertaken. Monitoring is important to determine the success of active forest management activities and how the forest reacts. For example, will young Pitch Pine trees germinate and replace killed mature pines, and will other species, such as oaks, replace pines in locations previously

dominated by pines. And have any forest management activities, such as suppression and cutting, actually helped to hinder the spread of a particular infestation.

Forest management is true physical activity in that it consists of physical activities to either hinder, reduce or mitigate the spread of Southern Pine Beetle or prevent it from occurring altogether. The two main forest management activities are suppression and thinning. Suppression is applied when Southern Pine Beetle has infested a particular forest or woodland, and is used to help reduce the spread of Southern Pine Beetle to healthy, uninfested trees. Suppression consists of cutting infested trees, cutting them into sections called bucking, and either leaving the sections in place on the ground or removing them from the area. Besides cutting into sections, sometimes trees may be debarked or even chipped to further disrupt and kill any remaining Southern Pine Beetle adults and larvae. Thinning is used in uninfested areas to selectively reduce the density of pines below a certain level to allow the remaining pines to become more robust and better able to withstand a future Southern Pine Beetle attack.

Here's an example of suppression. In the upper colored diagram you'll see that the active infestation is indicated by the orange colored trees. You see dead trees located to the right of those. And basically in the wintertime just the infested trees are cut because the beetles are inactive, they're dormant and they're not flying. And that has been shown to be pretty effective in Jersey and other areas in stopping a particular infestation or significantly hindering it.

In the lower diagram that is during the active flying months where because the beetles are emerging from trees and flying, we have to also besides cutting the infested trees, cut a swath of uninfested trees, a buffer area, so that that does not serve as an additional area they could attack.

DEC staff visited Jersey to learn from their suppression efforts and the U.S. Forest Service has also been consulted on efforts in the south and in Jersey. Suppression activities in Suffolk County, you heard me allude to Henry's Hollow/Munns Pond. To date, approximately 5500 trees and more than 35 acres have been cut on State, County, town and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service properties. National Park Service/Fire Island National Seashore has reported that it has treated 407 acres. This is was work that was primarily conducted during the winter before the insects could fly. And DEC and State parks have been conducting suppression in other areas as well. And U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has conducted suppression at Wertheim, and some of the towns have also done some small scale suppression activities. Cutting and leaving the trees in the area in which they are found is the primary way of handling this, just due to the sheer number of trees and the difficulty of removing trees from interior areas makes that the preferred method.

Many dead, stage three trees are left standing because these provide habitat for the nature predator of the Southern Pine Beetle, Clerid Beetles, which as that population grows help to naturally suppress Southern Pine Beetle. And the standing dead trees also provide habitat for very important species, some of which are rare. This is showing suppression activities being conducted at the Henry's Hollow/Munns Pond complex. You see these are Forest Rangers from DEC actively cutting trees.

Thinning, as I mentioned before, is used in uninfested areas to reduce the density of pines. Basically below 70 square feet of basal area, and at this level once the thinning has occurred, the remaining trees are able to grow stronger and healthier and much less stress because they're not competing with other pines for space, sunlight and nutrients. And if they are attacked subsequently, they'll be better able to withstand an attack because they'll be able to exude much greater quantities of pine sap.

And right now as I speak, DEC Foresters from other DEC regions and members of the Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Compact, of which New York State is a member, are conducting surveys on

various properties here in Suffolk County to obtain information which will be used in thinning operations and assessing priorities.

And this is an example of a thinned forest versus an unthinned forest. A thin forest is located on the left, while the unthinned forest is located on the right. And again, an aerial photograph taken in Florida in an area known as Lake George State Forest, you'll see that the area outlined in yellow had -- was thinned in 1995. A subsequent outbreak of Southern Pine Beetle in 2001 essentially left this area unscathed, the area that was thinned out. The pine trees there were able to successfully repel and survive the Southern Pine Beetle attack.

Also education outreach. We're doing a comprehensive education outreach program for agencies, aboricultural professionals and the general public. DEC prepared and published a fact sheet in 2014. It established a web page. DEC, the Commission and Cornell Cooperative Extension are responding to public inquiries, and DEC has coordinated and conducted a public agency meeting in January of 2015. An educational seminar for landscapers and other professionals was conducted at Bayard Cutting Arboretum in Great River. And DEC has been conducting meetings and briefings with partner agencies, including the Commission. And we ourselves at the Commission provide routine updates to our five Commission members, which are the State, the County and the three Pine Barrens towns of Brookhaven, Riverhead and Southampton.

These are some information response numbers and e-mail contacts and you folks should have hard copies of this that you can also refer to, and also there's a Southern Pine Beetle web page, as I indicated, on the DEC website.

And then planning. Planning is key to this overall effort. It incorporates and coordinates all the previously outlined response areas. Data collection, analysis and reporting are vital, and science and research play a major role. The Federal agencies, particularly U.S. Forest Service, Dartmouth College and New Jersey have been serving in an important advisory function. And our response team has also received significant input and guidance from Federal and State officials in the southern U.S. who have been dealing with Southern Pine Beetles for quite a few decades.

We use short-term and long-term planning for determining how and where and when to respond, and also one of the key efforts going forward will be securing and obtaining additional funding, including grants for all the measures that I have outlined previously.

So as I indicated before, unfortunately we will not be able to completely eradicate Southern Pine Beetle. As you'll see here, it was first discovered a little over a decade ago in Jersey, which has a habitat very similar to our Central Pine Barrens. Since it was discovered there, over 50,000 acres of pine trees have been killed, and in 2010 alone, 14,000 acres of pines were been killed in a single season.

Unfortunately, one of the things we have to hope for is having continued severely cold winters such as we experienced this past winter. That will help to aid in the effort to combat the beetle. But there's other types of management that we will continue to engage in, including suppression, particularly in highly infested areas, thinning, prescribed fire, and potential use of biological controls. There is some research being done on pheromone-based repellents. Continuing our reconnaissance efforts, aerial and ground surveys and basically creating an environment that's unfavorable to the beetle overall, thinning trees where appropriate, and conducting prescribed burns because it helps open the understory and decreases understory competition, and also releases additional nutrients to the surviving pine trees. And protecting high priority areas, including those that possess important ecological and recreation areas.

And with that, I think we're at the end of our program. This is our contact information, and John and I would be happy to respond to any questions that you may have.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I think there are a number of them, so I'll start with Legislator Lindsay. Thank you for your presentation, John.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Good afternoon. John, thanks for your presentation. I guess timing is everything. I just got an e-mail from a constituent who has what he thinks is an infestation on his residence. I'm going to walk this around to you and show you a picture and if you could comment and let me know if that is. But whether it is or it isn't, when -- if we have constituents that do have this infestation on their own property, what can we advise them to do and are there any resources out there to help them?

MR. WERNET:

I've been getting a lot of phone calls lately about it, and unfortunately there's not really much you can do. A lot of people confuse it with the Asian Longhorned Beetles. They think that we're going to come and cut the trees; that is not the case. We're focussing on the public lands, the Pine Barren Core themselves, but unfortunately there's really not much you can do on private property.

LEG. LINDSAY:

What would your advice be to the homeowners, though, if they have the trees removed do they -- I mean, there's one particular homeowner said that they think they have to burn the tree to stop the infestation from spreading. How would you advise them if they were contacting you?

MR. WERNET:

There are bark treatments you can use before the beetle, that's an important thing. Before the beetle comes in there are bark treatments you can use with a licensed applicator, but once the beetle is in the tree there's really not much you can do. I've been telling people if you provide enough water -- the tree's only defense is to pitch out and the more resources they have, the more water they have, the better able they are, but once it's in unfortunately it's too late. There's really not much you can do. It's -- I've been telling people, too, that it's up to your discretion if you want to remove it or not. Obviously it's standing dead. You probably don't want a standing dead tree in your yard. It's a lot of money and that's a big problem for a lot of land owners. But they don't need to burn it or chip or anything. Just remove the tree.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Okay. And by removing it they're not going to -- even if it's at stage two of your --

MR. WERNET:

Yep.

LEG. LINDSAY:

-- presentation they are not going to make the beetles spread?

MR. WERNET:

No, no. It's too far spread already. You know, we found it in Nassau that it doesn't matter. The beetle is constantly flying around and looking for suitable host trees.

LEG. LINDSAY:

From that photo are you able to determine if it was the Pine Beetle that infested that one particular tree?

MR. WERNET:

You know what? That's really dead. In fact, that's woodpecker damage. That tree has been dead for years.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Okay.

MR. WERNET:

There's no beetle in there.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Okay. All right. Thank you.

MR. WERNET:

Yup.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

All right. Legislator Hahn, did you have a question? While Legislator Hahn considers a question, Legislator Cilmi.

LEG. CILMI:

Hey, guys. You mentioned in your presentation that there's a -- that one of the natural predators at least for the Southern Pine Beetle is the Clerid Beetle. Is it -- are there negative impacts associated with the proliferation of the Clerid Beetle, and if there are not, is there a way that we can sort of increase the population of Clerid Beetles and therefore decrease the population of Southern Pine Beetles?

MR. WERNET:

Well, the Clerid Beetle, it's a natural predatory beetle. It eats not just Southern Pine, it eats many types of beetles. In fact, it lives on the bark waiting to attack, and when something flies it will come and eat them. But unfortunately what we use it for is just that if the Clerid Beetle is there most likely there's Southern Pine in the area, Southern Pine Beetle, so it's not effective enough to curtail the population, but it's a good indicator that it's there and I'm thrilled to see that they're there already eating potentially a beetle.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. What may be some other natural predators or impediments to the proliferation of the Southern Pine Beetle? Bats, for example. Is that an option? Birds?

MR. WERNET:

I mean, birds will a little bit. The thing is that they are so small, and woodpeckers do help a little, but the fact is it's just sheer numbers and there's literally thousands and thousands that these natural -- they essentially follow the beetles. The beetle goes and they're playing catch up, and we'll never see them control the population, but it's good to see that they're in the area. And they help, of course.

MR. PAVACIC:

One of the things to keep in mind with the biology of birds is that, you know, it takes a great amount of energy for a bird fly, to stay aloft and not sink to, you know, fight against gravity, so it's looking for the meatiest meal possible. So given a choice of a very large beetle that's easily noticeable and slower flying, it's going to be going for the big beetle as opposed to something as tiny as this.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

We need smaller birds.

LEG. CILMI:

So they're here. You said 50,000 acres over the past how long?

MR. PAVACIC:

About 13 years in Jersey.

LEG. CILMI:

Thirteen years in Jersey, 50,000 acres. Now, is that --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Sounds like a prison sentence.

LEG. CILMI:

Was most of that 50,000 acres killed or decimated as a result in the early stages of the identification of the population, or has it been pretty evenly spread. In other words, have efforts in New Jersey to prevent spread been effective?

MR. WERNET:

It's hard to say. That 50,000 acres is cumulative, so each year, you know, they'll lose 1,000 acres, then they'll use 3,000, and then they'll lose, you know, 100 acres. It fluctuates. They don't know exactly what causes that yet. The biggest year was in 2010; they lost 14,000 acres. They do the same thing that we're trying to do, is find the infestations and treat them before they grow like that picture John showed in Texas. The do nothing approach you allow the beetle population to grow, and then it takes out thousands of acres at one time. But we're trying to do the same thing New Jersey does, is capture the infestations before they grow, get the little spots that are only an acre or so. Like Henrys Hollow was 14 acres and we went out to check that two weeks ago and I have not found any new infestations, which I'm very happy about.

LEG. CILMI:

Interesting. But they fly, so even thinning I would imagine --

MR. WERNET:

Yeah. Well, thinning is the -- suppression is more like a band-aid. Thinning is the long-term beetle-proofing. You're creating that environment that the beetle won't do well in. The trees -- when you reduce the number of trees per acre, the less there's -- there's only so much sunlight, only so much water, and so the less they have to compete, the healthier they are. That's -- when you see the pitch that's the tree trying to push the beetles out. The more trees there are, the more competition, the less resources, so the less able they are to fight the infestation.

LEG. CILMI:

What other sort of species do you have on your radar that might be problematic for our area here?

MR. PAVACIC:

We have -- I mean, we've been fortunate so far that there's species in Upstate New York that have not made it down here, but one of them is Emerald Ash Borer. There's others, there's other syndromes. There's a disease called Oak Wilt, which is, I believe, a fungus which causes very rapid death of oak trees. Fortunately that has not made it down here. As you know, Asian Longhorned Beetle has been here for a while, and that's been pretty well contained. So there's -- with a global economy that we have, unfortunately different types of foreign species are introduced fairly frequently, and sometimes it take a while for them to be discovered only after they've spread

significantly.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

What about Gypsy Moths? I'm noticing the caterpillars everywhere right now.

MR. PAVACIC:

That's episodic now. There are outbreaks on occasion. I mean, anecdotally, I remember when I was a kid, you know, growing up in the 60's, I remember the first time I saw a gypsy moth outbreak. I got up early in the morning and they were gathered around, thousands of them, by streetlights. But I think that they -- we have some natural predators and natural diseases that also help to keep them in check, and some of the weather conditions, too. I believe, you know, we've had some very moist springs where that helps to spread a fungus I believe that naturally kills them. I'd ask John maybe if he could speak to that also.

MR. WERNET:

You pretty much covered it. You know, that's it.

LEG. CILMI:

How many acres are the Pine Barrens?

MR. PAVACIC:

The Pine Barrens is 105,000 acres; about 55,000 acres in the Core Preservation Area and the remainder in the Compatible Growth area.

LEG. CILMI:

Wow. So in ten years, I mean, if left unchecked, it's conceivable that a bad infestation could decimate the Central Core of the Pine Barrens very, very quickly.

MR. PAVACIC:

Correct.

LEG. CILMI:

And, of course, that has chilling possibilities in terms of the impact on our overall ecology here. Thank you.

MR. PAVACIC:

You're welcome.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

You know, because it's Pine Barrens, and because it's over our main drinking water resources, I would imagine that you're reluctant to use chemical types of controls. Is that correct?

MR. WERNET:

Yeah, absolutely. We're not even discussing that because it is our ground -- drinking water.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Can I ask, though, you mentioned in the presentation, or John mentioned a number of times prescribed burns and controlled burns. I have only heard positive things about controlled burns. I know that there are some seeds that require that incendiary effect to be able to repopulate, and then for tick control it's great, it's for nutrient. But I don't know when was the last time there was a controlled burn. I haven't seen one in a long, long time, and there must obviously be some obstacle to controlled burns, right? Can you talk a little bit about that, because why aren't we doing that, and by not doing it, are we potentially creating a disaster waiting to happen. We have all these

dead trees. We're pretty much on the 20th anniversary of the Pine Barrens fire, you know, this August. Are we, you know, allowing the conditions to repeat themselves for what, you know, could be a really serious fire event.

MR. PAVACIC:

Well, I can tell you that a prescribed fire is conducted generally on an annual basis. Right now the primary agency that is conducting prescribed fires is DEC. Some of the limiting factors are that you need to have someone who is a qualified burn boss, somebody who is experienced and who has certain national qualifications to conduct an actual prescribed burn.

If you remember going back a few years ago, the Nature Conservancy used to have a prescribed burn program, and I guess it was around 2009 or 2008, they decided -- that's when the economy was taking its downturn, they had to make some hard choices, and they unfortunately had to completely cut their prescribed fire program. So they had a burn boss, who was based here on the Island, who used to oversee burns not just on grassland areas, but the more complex wooded areas, and that person was laid off along with the rest of their prescribed fire team and all of their equipment was moved off Long Island. So that severely impacted the ability to do that.

In addition, there had been some Federal funding for work that was done by DEC, prescribed firework, at their Sarnoff Preserve in the Northampton/Riverside/Flanders area. That money, unfortunately, ran out, and they were not able to return to that effort. DEC, though, I will tell you, at least on an annual basis, does conduct prescribed fires. However, those are normally on grasslands. The woodland areas are, because they're more complex and have a higher amount of fuel, you have to make sure you have the right conditions for that.

But I will tell you happily that Brookhaven National Lab, first of all, where we had the 2012 fire begin, they do have burn plans in place, and it's my understanding that they are going to try to reimplement prescribed fire on portions of their property over the summer. In addition, the Commission is working with the DEC and the County on working on prescribed fire. The Commission has some funding for that to do prescribed fire work in the Flanders area as well as Rocky Point. And so that's something that we're hoping to have unfold over the next couple of years. We're also -- at the Commission we're looking to try to bring on somebody who has much more extensive fire experience to join our staff and to help to bolster these efforts.

But one of the other things to keep in mind is that we have a very narrow window in which to normally conduct prescribed burns. You have to have the right combination of relative humidity. Wind speeds generally have to be below ten miles an hour, sustained, and the fuel that you're burning has to be at the optimal humidity levels as well. If it's too moist it won't burn, if it's too dry, you're talking about a hazardous condition where a prescribed fire could potentially get out of control, so you need to have those optimal conditions. You also need to have folks who are qualified, who've taken the appropriate training courses and have maintained the national certification required for that. There's a particular course known as S13190. It's a five day course folks like myself have taken, and we have to go through a refresher every year to do that.

So those are some of the factors here. There's other parts of the country where there's a broader window available in which to conduct prescribed fire, but for us we have a much narrower window, particularly in the spring, where you basically have from the April and May time period in which to conduct that. Very often, as I have indicated, you know, the weather conditions don't cooperate. We might start out with winds below ten miles an hour, but by part way through the day those winds could pick up, and even if you're starting a prescribed fire you have to shut it down because of those factors. However, I'm confident that over the next several years you will start to see more prescribed fire being conducted on the Island. Also we've hear from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that they are also looking to reengage prescribed fire. They went through some of the similar types

of situations where they lost their qualified burn personnel, but they're looking to get a regional person there who will conduct some prescribed fires as well.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

That's good to hear. I hope we go outside of just the Pine Barrens areas, because there's areas where we had grassland, habitat, that is completely gone now. We have areas with major tick infestations. I'm thinking out in, you know, out at the County park in Montauk where they used to routinely do controlled burns, and now it hasn't been done in many, many years, and we've lost a lot of the grassland habitat because of it. So I'd love to -- John, I'd love to see you as like the point person on controlled burns since you have that training and you have the resources to, you know, identify where and when to do it. But I think it's a tool we need to employ and we haven't employed for a long time in my mind. But I am happy to hear that it is moving in that direction.

Let me ask you one question and then I'll turn it over to some of my colleagues. I know they have other questions on this. You mentioned the Flanders area. You know I've been concerned about the fire department being able to get in there and do their job and a lot of the fire lanes having dead oak trees from the oak mortality that happened. I know we were supposed to have a meeting and because of a family issue I was not able to do that. What is the status? I've heard that there is a -- kind of a task force or a joint team that's going to go in in August and do some tree removal, going in there with chainsaws. I'm happy to hear -- but could you really just briefly update me on that progress?

MR. PAVACIC:

Well, there's two main resource available. The County has a USAR Team, which is comprised of -- it's basically Urban Search and Rescue Team, that has folks who have fire training. A lot of folks who are members are volunteer firefighters. It includes folks from FRES, who work as Fire Marshals or in other areas of FRES. And these are folks who also are qualified to operate a chainsaw. As I alluded to, for prescribed fire, for doing burns, there's a five day minimum course that has to be taken. The same is true of chainsaws. Just because someone claims that they know how to operate a chainsaw does not necessarily mean that they know how to do it safely. And there is, again, a nationally recognized five day course called S212 that provides that kind of training through our Fire Academy that's run by the Commission. We provided that training to folks. But that's one of the considerations to factor in, that if somebody is offering to remove downed material free of charge, with chainsaws you have to be very concerned as to what level of training those folks have because of the liability and safety issues involved. However, the USAR folks have that training. There is also a contingent of folks from the 106th Air National Guard at Gabreski Airport, who recently went through our S212 training. It's my understanding in speaking to them that they may also be available to also conduct chainsaw work off the premises of the National Guard base there as well.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

And that's scheduled for August?

MR. PAVACIC:

I don't know the exact dates at this time.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay. Maybe you can get back to me on that, or maybe the Commissioner knows. There actually is a bill on the agenda for an intermunicipal agreement with the Flanders Fire Department to do some of that clearing. The Commissioner and I have been discussing doing it by permit, but we don't need to do it at all if it's going to get done by this qualified team of, you know, the Air National Guard at the 106th as well as this USAR Team?

MR. PAVACIC:

USAR Team, Urban Search and Rescue.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Urban Search and Rescue Team. So that's also promising. I just would like to know what kind of a timeframe.

MR. PAVACIC:

There's a couple of considerations, though, also to keep in mind. One of the things that we've had in that area has been a very successful anti-ATV and off-road vehicle program that had set up barriers and other methods of preventing all-terrain vehicle riders and four wheelers from illegally traversing State and County and local properties. So it's a balancing act that one has to engage in. If you're opening up an area and providing more access for legitimate use such as fire department access, the downside of that, though, is that you may be enhancing the ability for illegal ATV riders and off-road vehicle riders to access an area also.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I understand that. But to the fire department, who are concerned about homes that are on the perimeter of the parkland, they need to do their job to save lives. So, yes, we have to look at all those things, but I'm sure there's ways to do both, to prevent the illegal uses but also to give the fire department the access they need to save human lives. All right. Which direction am I going? Who had questions about this? No one? Kara?

LEG. HAHN:

Okay. So I was paying attention, but I'm a little -- I'm a little confused. We were also going to hear about the response on County lands. So is this specific to the Pine Barrens Core and area or -- I know that we're coordinating, but what -- can we hear from our Commissioner about what's getting done in our parklands, you know, where the thinning is going to happen, where the, you know, what exactly is the plan at this point for our park properties.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Some of the areas that were mentioned were County parkland, like Hubbard was mentioned and Munns Pond. Those are both County parks.

LEG. HAHN:

So do you -- for those County parks that you mentioned, do you have the response decided on what's happening in each of them?

MR. WERNET:

Well, Munns Pond was adjacent to Henry's Hollow State lands, and we coordinated with the County to treat both the areas, because the beetle won't pay attention to political boundaries.

LEG. HAHN:

Of course.

MR. WERNET:

So Munns Pond has been suppressed. That was probably the largest -- it was the largest infestation on State lands and it was right next to the County land, so we treated it as the same.

LEG. HAHN:

But there's many, many County parks that are affected, and so is there treatment or suppression or thinning happening in each location where it's been found or?

MR. PAVACIC:

That hasn't happened. The first thing that we're doing is, as I indicated, trying to understand the extent of the infestation. So that's why we do the aerial reconnaissance, then the ground treatment.

LEG. HAHN:

Well, I know. We were told that the aerial stuff was happening back in January, and then the ground truthing was going to happen, and then we needed to get to the action before the leaves got on the -- you know, before they came out and were moving around. So here we are in June, it's way above 55 degrees and they're flying. So was there action able to be taken in time, you know, in some of these cases or, you know, I just -- we've been waiting, waiting, waiting, and I'm not sure that I understand what's actually happened.

MR. PAVACIC:

Well, there is -- you know, it hasn't just been, as I indicated, DEC and the County. State Parks has undertaken suppression activities. The Town of Brookhaven did a suppression activity. It's my understanding Islip did. So the other -- I will point out that County staff have been involved in doing the ground truthing and monitoring, and so we talked to -- with the County and DEC on a regular basis. But it's something that has to be -- this is, as John indicated, the Henry's Hollow/Munns Pond area was considered the top priority, and so focal point of the available resources was that area.

And as I indicated before, chainsaw operations can be hazardous, particularly if you're felling trees. So you have to -- it is a measured program where you have to make sure that folks are situationally aware of what's going on around them, that folks understand their assignments, and that you're conducting operations in a safe method. Plus, the folks who are undertaking suppression were doing it in the worse possible conditions, in subfreezing temperatures, some of the coldest days of the year.

LEG. HAHN:

Two feet of snow.

MR. PAVACIC:

And it was a lot of trees. You know, you're talking about some deep snow to get to it. So it's something in terms of we are working on developing plans for other areas at this point, but we have not yet identified other areas for suppression or thinning. That's something that we'll be working on over the next several --

LEG. HAHN:

What we need to know as the oversight committee for the Parks Department, as we're approaching the time when we're going to be, you know, talking and the County Executive is going to be creating the Operating Budget, you know, we all know the park staff -- staffing has been very limited. You know, we really need to know, you know, when you're talking about the training for people to use the -- what are they called?

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Chainsaws?

LEG. HAHN:

Chainsaws.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

We just need some Canadian lumberjacks to come down and solve the problem.

LEG. HAHN:

Do we need a burn guy in our Parks Department? You know, like we -- we need to have -- you know, we need to be asking -- bathroom cleaners. That's another discussion. You know, we have to be here and understand what this means for our Parks Department. What is expected of our Parks Department. How do we need to contribute to protect our parkland, or this -- you did say we can't eradicate it, but we can't let it go, because we don't want it to look like Texas, in more ways than one. So what do we need to know here about what this means for us and our department and what you need, your resources? Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Obviously we need resources to address this situation. You know, John talked about the number of trees that were taken down. We have -- looking at two of the worse infestations were at Munns Pond and the State was kind enough to kind of jump in and take that. I think it was in the neighborhood of 200 trees. I think -- another big infestation we had was Spring Meadow, which was also adjacent to a State and Federal Reserve. We took down 50 trees in there. Again, we're still assessing how bad the infestation is, where it is, before I can come here and tell you that I need X number of dollars to hire outside contractors or X number of employees to train in chainsaw.

It seems to be no matter where we look, we seem to find it. There are different ways to address it, whether it's eliminating trees, thinning the trees, prescribed burns and whatnot, so we're working very closely with the Pine Barrens. It's not a simple answer. It's not something that's going to be eradicated in this year. I know you have a set time frame, but this is something that's going to be going on for years to come. So we'd rather have a good plan in place and I can come and tell you that, you know, we need X, Y, Z and then just say, you know, give me \$100,000 for contracts. I don't know if that answers your question. It's probably not as specific as you would like.

LEG. HAHN:

So what's the time line? How long will it take, you know, where -- I don't know that I fully understand in terms of our land and our responsibility where we are in the -- we've done the aerial photographs. Have we completed the ground truthing?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

We have not completed the ground truthing.

LEG. HAHN:

Is that still going on?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

It's ongoing. We have one person in our department that specializes in it. That person is now dealing with Piper Plover on the outer beaches. We have limited staff. We're using aials that the Pine Barrens -- actually DEC is supplying us. Most of the parkland that's affected is within the Core Pine Barrens, so that's why we're working closely with John. So it's not like we're not doing anything. We're working closely with the agencies that can help us out the most.

LEG. HAHN:

Okay. But the one person trained in ground truthing is working with Piper Plovers, so that's a problem. But you also had mentioned pheromone -- the potential, and I had asked this question months ago, not here but at one of our other -- either CEQ or Water Quality Review Committee meetings. You know, Cornell Cooperative Extension has a lot of activities on -- with pheromones for pesticide purposes, keeping pests away from farmland. Is Cornell actively involved in those studies that you mentioned for this beetle? Do you know?

MR. WERNET:

Yeah, we've been working with Dan Gilrein from the Cornell Cooperative Extension. No one has really found the pheromones that do the trick. In fact, even the traps we have out now we don't find a lot of Southern Pine Beetle. For some reason it doesn't behave like other insects do. There is research going on, but no one has found the magic bullet to find the pheromone traps. They're more used just to determine if they're in areas, but we would like to see that. When I went to New Jersey the biggest thing they told me is it's not a single outcome. You're using multiple things. You're using, you know, the aerial surveys, the trappings, and figure out where the beetle is to combat it.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

No silver bullet.

MR. WERNET:

No silver bullet.

LEG. HAHN:

But the thinning, you know, but it sounds like the thinning is, you know, one of the solutions that produces a healthier forest, a healthier, you know -- and the protection against the beetle, but, you know, you talked about all these resources and you cut down 240 trees. I mean, in order to thin the 100,000 acres, if that's what you would do, I don't know, you know, if the Core and the Compatible Growth. I don't know where you decide thinning will happen and where it doesn't, but.

MR. WERNET:

That's a really difficult question. That's -- right now we have ten Foresters from other regions of New York State right now doing Rocky Point. It's our largest State owned land. What they're going to do is after they're finished we can sit there and prioritize our stands to determine, you know, what areas to thin. Then comes a question of how we're going to do it. There really are no sawmills or products for pitch pine. So we would have to find loggers on Long Island, and I don't think they exist.

LEG. HAHN:

Can they help make dunes? Didn't we once do that?

MR. WERNET:

It's not easy. You know, right now we're at the stage, I mean, we can -- it was me and five Forest Rangers cutting all those trees, and I can't do that forever.

LEG. HAHN:

No.

MR. WERNET:

And so it's just it's a really complex problem, and right now we have to pay people to cut the trees, and it's going to take a lot of resources.

LEG. CILMI:

I have an idea.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Thank you, Legislator Hahn.

LEG. CILMI:

How about our Works Programs, through either the jail or --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

The training issues with the chainsaws, that's the problem.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

There are training issues and I'm sure there are liability issues as well.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

At this point I want to move to the agenda. I do want to thank John Wernet, Supervising Forester at DEC, and of course John Pavacic from the Central Pine Barrens Joint Planning Commission. Thank you for a very thorough presentation and your patience in answering all of our questions. We're going to move to the agenda.

LEG. CILMI:

Thanks, guys.

MR. PAVACIC:

You're welcome.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay. So we're going to start with Tabled Resolutions.

Tabled Resolutions

IR 1441-15 - Authorizing Inter-Municipal Agreement with Flanders Fire District to maintain fire lanes in County parks (Schneiderman). Commissioner, I spoke of this a moment ago.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

We did have a meeting scheduled. I think your office cancelled and I think it's scheduled within the next two weeks with the Flanders Fire Department. We're actually waiting on your schedule.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

And then we have this additional information, which I'm sure you're aware of, too, with that USAR Team, Search and Response Team. So that all sounds promising. So at this point I'll make a motion to table 1441. Seconded by Legislator Hahn. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? IR 1441 is tabled. **(Vote: 5-0-0-0)**

Introductory Prime

IR 1461-15 - Authorizing use of Cupsogue County Park by Blessings in a Backpack and Backpacks for Fellow Students for their Run For A Reason Fundraiser (Co. Exec.). I'll make a motion, second by Legislator Lindsay. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Approved. **(Vote: 5-0-0-0)**

IR 1462-15 - Authorizing use of Manorville Hills County Park by the Long Island Greenbelt Trail Conference for its 15K Trail Race Fundraiser (Co. Exec.). I'll make a motion. Do we have a second?

LEG. McCAFFREY:

Second.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Second by Legislator McCaffrey. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Approved. **(Vote:**

5-0-0-0)

IR 1463-15 - Authorizing use of Cedar Beach County Park by Event Power for its Mighty North Fork Triathlon Fundraiser (Co. Exec.). I'll make the motion, second by Legislator Hahn. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Approved. **(Vote: 5-0-0-0)**

IR 1467-15 - Authorizing use of the Long Island Maritime Museum by the Rotary Club of Sayville for Annual Beefsteak Fundraiser (Co. Exec.).
Motion by Legislator Lindsay.

LEG. CILMI:
Second.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
Second by Legislator Cilmi. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **(Vote: 5-0-0-0)**

LEG. LINDSAY:
Mr. Clerk, put me as a cosponsor, please.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
Before I get to this last one, just a very quick question to the Parks Commissioner. We routinely approve the use of these parks by these non-for-profits. Some of these are relatively minor events. I don't mind doing it, but I know there was a 200 person event at the County park in Montauk last weekend. People were calling me about it. We don't -- we don't do the weddings and those types of events through the Legislature. Why is that, that we do just a simple permit for those events?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:
Only fundraisers need to come through the Legislature. I don't know why that reason is, but that's the case. We do hundreds of permits every year.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
Do we have any limitations on how many private events we allow that aren't fundraisers?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:
We do not. I guess it's based on the park usage.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
And is there any limit, if somebody wanted to do an event with 2,000 people that wasn't a fundraiser?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:
We would take a look at it on a case by case basis. I review them, we talk to the park staff, we talk to the support services that are out there what resources we are going to need to allocate towards it, and it's either approved or disapproved.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
I think at some point we need to talk about a trigger, at some point, you know, whether it's a giant wedding or whatever. Not a fundraiser, but an event that somebody's having, whatever, retirement party, whatever it might be. If it's of a certain scale and a certain frequency, I think it rises to review by the Legislature. We're trying to protect those parks as well and make them accessible to the full public, and when you have an event, and I'm not saying we shouldn't have a 200 person wedding, but it's not available in the same way to the public when we do that.

I don't mind a limited number of events, it's good for the Park Department for revenue, but I think at some point we may need to have a trigger for when it rises to the point where it ought to come before us. But we can have that conversation at another time.

IR 1468-15 - Authorizing use of the Long Island Maritime Museum by the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation for their Annual "Sayville Run/Walk & Barbeque" Fundraiser (Co. Exec.).

Motion by Legislator Lindsay, second by Legislator McCaffrey was it or Cilmi? Legislator Cilmi. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? IR 1468 is approved. **(Vote: 5-0-0-0)**

Is there any other business for the Commissioner? Seeing none, we are adjourned.

(*The meeting was adjourned at 1:53 p.m. *)