

Beetle infestation

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pine beetle infestation traveled from the other side of the airport. He noted a new tree growing out of a stump.

Arborist Dave Moyer said he has cut down 30 trees in the subdivision, which seems to be the center of the current infestation in the southern part of the county. He said the beetles have been sweeping through different areas indiscriminately.

Moyer said the first apparent large-scale infestation was found when a bike trail was cleared in Cape May Court House.

"They said they were plowing trees and they were just turning into dust," he said.

An area near the Municipal Utilities Authority's Transfer Station near Indian Trail Road in Middle Township was devastated by the beetles, Moyer said.

"My opinion, it's Mother's Nature's natural selection thinning things out," he said.

Jenny Carleo, agricultural agent with the Cooperative Extension of Cape May County, Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, said the county is not tracking the locations of southern pine beetle infestations. She said the beetles have been in the county for a long time.

According to the state Department of Parks and Forests, the beetles attack all pine species, including pitch, shortleaf, loblolly and Virginia, preferring trees weakened from drought, stress or injury.

"The tree crown displays the first outward sign of infestation when it rapidly turns from a healthy green to yellow, red and, finally, brown. A closer inspection may reveal pitch tubes on the trunk and S-shaped galleries under the bark."

The department's website states as pine-dominant forests

cover an estimated 440,000 acres in southern New Jersey, the beetle poses a considerable threat to the state's forest resource.

"Since its re-entry into the state in 2001, the beetle has impacted approximately 26,600 total acres, and more than half that total occurred in 2010 alone. Since 2001, southern pine beetle populations in New Jersey have been on the rise, destroying 1,000 new acres of pine forests each year on average, but infestations remained largely confined to the southern sections of the state."

According to the department, in 2008, southern pine beetles crossed the Egg Harbor River for the first time and entered the pine forests of Atlantic County, and continue to move north and west.

In 2010, New Jersey experienced the warmest growing season on record with an average temperature of 68.3 degrees and below-average precipitation. These conditions quickly advanced the beetle's range and damage levels, according to the state Department of Parks and Forests.

The USDA Forest Service estimates 80 percent of the pine forest could be affected by the beetle within the next 10 years if no action is taken.

"Forests devastated by the beetle become fire-prone from many standing dead trees as well as accumulated leaf litter. Also, the decreased canopy cover causes the forest floor and vegetation to dry out quickly, increasing wildfire risk."

In forested areas, landowners can reduce the risk of southern pine beetle outbreaks by actively managing their forest. Trees under stress become susceptible to the infestation while healthy, strong trees resist beetle attacks, according to the Forest Service.

"Thin forests so trees are

spaced 20 feet apart or greater. This thinning not only promotes healthy growth and form of the trees, but the increased space also interrupts pheromone communication between the beetles.

"To protect a high-value individual tree for up to two years, an approved forester may recommend a spray or injection treatment. Treatments are only effective if applied prior to a southern pine beetle attack.

"To control populations and minimize the spread, foresters must detect and suppress infestations while the beetles still actively infest the tree. If untreated, beetles move quickly to adjacent forests. The best control option is to cut infested trees and sell to a sawmill. This disrupts populations from expanding and destroys all life stages. If the infested trees cannot be sold, remove the bark, buck the logs

or chip the wood to kill the beetles in the trees. Contact a New Jersey Certified Tree Expert or Approved Forester for professional assistance with SPB identification, tree removal and chipping."

The Forest Service advises before cutting trees, contact your local or county shade tree commission for an explanation of local and state ordinances and permit requirements. After suppression, keep all infested wood chips or logs away from uninfested pines to avoid spreading the beetle.

For woodland owners, cut actively infested pines plus a 50- to 100-foot buffer of adjacent uninfested pines, fell trees toward infestation center, cut and chip infested trees on site.

For homeowners, cut and chip infested trees on site. De-bark and cut infested trees into pieces and enclose completely under a tarp.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE
Pitch tubes on the trunk and S-shaped galleries under the bark are indications of a Southern pine beetle infestation.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE
Dr. Joseph and Anne Salvatore have suggested the creation of a dog park at the Cape May Airport in Lower Township.

Dog park

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could be aided by open space funds.

Joseph Salvatore said a dog park would fit the criteria for open space funds under recreation. He said two dog trails exist at the airport, each one a quarter-mile in length lovingly maintained by a Villas resident.

Green said if the DRBA wanted to ever build on the proposed site of the dog park, it could be moved to another location, Joseph Salvatore said.

The proposed location would be adjacent to the two dog trails on Ranger Road, northwest of the former Everlon building. Joseph Salvatore said water and sewer service was available adjacent to the property and electricity lines were about 100 yards from the site. He said there was unlimited parking available in the area.

Mayor Michael Beck said it was a positive idea but there was much involved in operating a dog park such as insurance, maintenance and enforcement of rules such as inoculations of dogs required to be up to date.

He said he hoped the Recreation Advisory Board could determine if a dog park is feasible.

Councilman David Perry said he thought having a dog park at the airport was a "fantastic idea." Councilman Tom Conrad said he concurred with the mayor.

During public comment, Helen Thompson, who previously presented council with a concept of creating a dog beach called Mutt's Cove, said she supported a dog park if it was in addition to a dog beach in the township. She said a dog park at the airport would not offer swimming for dogs.

Thompson was successful in securing an injunction against the township's new ordinance keeping dogs off township beaches from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

until a July 9 court date.

She asked council to reconsider creating Mutt's Cove on 13 acres of beach between the canal and Lincoln Boulevard.

"Fishermen have a place, surfers have a place, everybody has a place except dog owners," she said.

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