

HOME NEWS TRIBUNE

State plants trees in four beetle-ravaged towns

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A total of 1,427 trees will be planted in four Central Jersey communities as part of a current replacement project in areas affected by infestations of the Asian Longhorned Beetle.

The latest tree replacements were announced yesterday by Commissioner Bradley M. Campbell of the state Department of Environmental Protection.

The four communities are Carteret, which is getting 556 trees; Rahway, 307; Linden, 391; and Woodbridge, 173. Trees are being replaced both on public and private properties.

"Carteret lost a little over 4,000 trees," said Mayor Daniel J. Reiman, adding that the current program is the second planting in Carteret. Some 400 trees were planted on private property in the spring.

Residents had the option of having a new tree planted for each lost and also had a choice of the variety they desired, including pine and oak trees.

Planting was scheduled to begin in Carteret this week and should end next month. When complete, the reforestation project will cover the rest of the 4,000, with homeowners who lost trees getting first priority, Reiman said.

Trees on both private and city-owned Linden properties are being replaced currently, said Gary Luciano, aide to Linden Mayor John Gregorio.

"The beetles didn't care if it was private property or city property" when they attacked, he added. Planting in Linden is expected to be completed in November.

In Rahway, "the majority of those trees will be planted on private property and we will see about 75 trees along the street and in Howard Field," a city park on Stockton Street, said Jeff Jotz, aide to Mayor James Kennedy. The infested trees were removed by the state and federal departments of agriculture.

Jotz said it is anticipated that the Rahway trees will be planted in November. "The mayor takes trees very seriously. The area is quite barren, so these trees will be very welcome," he said.

Replacement trees include the Amelanchier, Littleleaf Linden and Douglas Fir varieties, with Douglas Firs to be planted at Howard Field, Jotz noted.

Woodbridge Mayor Frank G. Pelzman said the replacement planting in the township is expected in November and that those in charge are "pretty confident" they have the infestation problem under control.

The DEP's Forest Service is managing the forest restoration. "It is important that we keep the green in the Garden State," said Acting Gov. Richard J. Codey, who pointed out that "more than 5,000 trees had to be removed because of infestation."

The tree-planting project is part of the first phase of the \$1.6 million reforestation effort to replace the 5,400 trees removed because of the beetle infestations. The project is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service.

"The landscape of these cities and communities suffered a major blow from the invasive Asian Longhorned Beetle. Replanting the trees will restore the natural canopy once enjoyed by the residents and area businesses," Campbell said.

The state agriculture department, along with APHIS, is continuing to remove infected and host trees. Replacement trees measure about 10 feet tall.

Asian Longhorned Beetles first were discovered in the United States in 1996 in Brooklyn, N.Y, and were found again in 2001 in Manhattan's Central Park.

In New Jersey, the beetle initially was detected in 2002 in Jersey City and infested trees were removed. No new outbreaks have been identified to date.