

LONG ISLAND PINE BARRENS RESTORATION 2019–2020



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) Division of Lands and Forests (DLF) continues to manage the southern pine beetle (SPB) infestation and restore the pine barrens on Long Island. For more information on SPB, visit: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/99331.html>.

The Pine Barrens

The Long Island Central Pine Barrens is a savannah-like landscape dominated by grasses and forbs with scattered trees and shrubs. It is a fire-dependent ecosystem and requires regular low-intensity forest fires to create and maintain a healthy pine barrens system.

Suppression of natural fire disturbance and a lack of forest management have caused much of the pine barrens to become densely packed with overcrowded and weakened trees.

Southern Pine Beetle

Crowded forest conditions coupled with climatic changes exacerbated the severity of the SPB outbreak discovered in 2014. SPB has since killed hundreds of thousands of pine trees on Long Island.

- DLF's Forest Health crew continued SPB survey and suppression, including aerial surveys of the entire pine barrens, which involved mapping over 3,000 acres of potential SPB activity and ground-surveying those areas.
- DLF's Forest Health crew identified and cut down 554 trees for SPB suppression in 2019. This continues the decline in the number of trees cut for suppression (6,777 in 2017 and 2,466 in 2018) and illustrates the effectiveness of DLF's efforts to combat SPB on Long Island.

Forest Restoration

To improve the health of the pine barrens, DEC practices forest restoration, which is management designed to promote ecological function. A diverse and healthy forest community is more resilient to pests, diseases, and unstable climatic conditions.

- DLF's Forest Health crew performed a 75-acre restorative thinning in Sarnoff State Forest in Riverhead on Long Island.
 - This restoration project will make the forest more resilient against future attack from SPB.
 - Removing large amounts of woody fuel sources, like smaller trees and scrub oak, decreases the risk of a catastrophic wildfire while creating an environment suitable for low-intensity prescribed burns.
- DLF's crew cleaned up hundreds of pounds of industrial waste metal from Sarnoff State Forest during management operations.
- In Rocky Point State Forest, DLF contractors marked over 500 acres for future management and built 13 miles of fire breaks to protect people and property from wildfires.



Before



Immediately after thinning



Six months after thinning