

ARBOR DAY CELEBRATED IN AREA WHERE BEETLE HAS ATTACKED TREES

RAHWAY – New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Charles M. Kuperus and Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bradley M. Campbell joined Rahway Mayor James Kennedy and others at the Grover Cleveland Elementary School at noon on Thursday, April 28, to commemorate Arbor Day with the planting of trees that are resistant to the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB). Arbor Day is officially on Friday, April 29.

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Secretary Kuperus spoke about the importance of cooperation among public and private partners in the fight against the beetle, giving special mention to Public Service Electric and Gas (PSE&G) for their help with trees around power lines and Covanta Union, the company running the Rahway incinerator, for their help in burning wood chips from trees cut down due to ALB infestation.

“The surest way for us to eradicate the Asian longhorned beetle is to work cooperatively,” said Secretary Kuperus. “Mayor Kennedy and the officials of Rahway are a great example of that spirit of cooperation. The section of their city’s web site dealing with the ALB is packed with information, and they have been very helpful as the contractors have moved through the city to remove trees. In addition, private-sector partners like PSE&G and Covanta Union have shown great public-mindedness in going out of their way to help this eradication effort.”

“We are very fortunate to have formed a great partnership with the city of Rahway and the State and US Departments of Agriculture to act swiftly in eradicating this invasive insect,” said Commissioner Campbell. “As we begin to reforest these cities, we look forward to working with the residents and for their support in ensuring the survival and longevity of these new trees.”

About a dozen students from the Cleveland School planted trees that are not susceptible to the Asian longhorned beetle. An infestation of the beetle was discovered in Rahway, Linden, Woodbridge and Carteret in 2004. Because of that, 8,600 trees either infested or at high risk of being infested with the beetle are being removed from the four towns and will be replaced with varieties that do not attract the beetle.

Secretary Kuperus also acknowledged two people who were instrumental in finding the infestation, saving months or even years worth of further damage by the beetle. Don Base of Carteret was the first person to contact the NJDA about a beetle on a tree in his yard. Several days later, Joan Karaczkiewicz of Carteret saw a News 12 New Jersey report about the beetle and called to alert the NJDA about a large infestation of beetles on the Rahway-Carteret border.

“It is incredibly important, especially as we head into the warmer months, that we have people like Don and Joan keeping an eye out for this invasive pest,” said Secretary Kuperus. “Anyone who even suspects that an insect they’re seeing might possibly be the Asian longhorned beetle should call 1-866-BEETLE-1 and report what they’ve seen. We take every one of these sightings very seriously.”