



Southern Pine Beetle at Fire Island National Seashore

Background

The southern pine beetle (SPB), a bark beetle native to the southern United States, has steadily expanded its range north and west, possibly due to climate change. Considered one of the most destructive forest pests in the United States the SPB attacks all species of pine including pitch pine, the predominant pine species of the Long Island Pine Barrens and on Fire Island. Minimizing the damage to the more than 100,000 acres of pine habitat on Long Island and Fire Island is paramount in determining how to respond to the SPB at Fire Island National Seashore.

In late October, 2014 the National Park Service (NPS), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and other local, state, and federal agencies confirmed the presence of SPB along the south shore of Long Island including the William Floyd Estate and on Fire Island along the western portion of the Sunken Forest.

DEC and US Forest Service Forest (USFS) experts leading the SPB response on Long Island recommend infested trees be cut down, cut into two-foot sections, and left on the ground or chipped in order to eliminate SPB.

NPS Response

- FINS secured a \$97,000 USFS Forest Health Protection Grant to ensure identified infestations are treated before the SPB emerges in Spring 2015.
- Approximately 400 infested trees have been identified and marked at the William Floyd Estate on Long Island and fewer than 50 infested trees have been identified and marked along the western portion of the Sunken Forest on Fire Island.
- A NPS Arborist Incident Response Team is scheduled to begin cutting trees on Fire Island and at the William Floyd Estate on Long Island in early April.

Signs of the Southern Pine Beetle

- The beetle is about the size of a grain of rice, and is red-brown to black in color. Due to their small size, it is unlikely that adult beetles will be observed.
- The SPB tunnels through the bark and disrupts the flow of nutrients, typically killing the tree in 2-4 months. A common sign of SPB infestation are "pitch tubes," small holes in tree bark emitting orange or whitish sap.
- Infested trees may also show a "browning crown," with its predominately brown or orange needles.



More Information

- Fire Island National Seashore Chief of Resource Management Mike Bilecki, 631-687-4760
- New York State DEC Southern Pine Beetle Website: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/99331.html>