

# News Release



**Long Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex**  
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## **WERTHEIM NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE TO CLOSE ADDITIONAL TRAIL FOR MANAGEMENT OF THE SOUTHERN PINE BEETLE**

Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge is currently working to manage a southern pine beetle infestation on its property. A \$200,000 grant from U.S. Forest Service will fund the removal of several hundred beetle infested trees and additional thinning in forested areas on the refuge to prevent further spread of the southern pine beetle. The quick removal of infested trees can slow the spread of the destructive pest to other pine trees and forests.

All the tree removal and the additional thinning has been successfully completed on the White Oak Nature Trail; this trail will be open to the public beginning on March 31st. A special thank you goes out to the refuges' neighbors and visitors for respecting the temporary closure.

However, the Black Tupelo Trail will be closing starting on April 1st. This was unanticipated originally but after additional forest surveys, refuge biologists have identified additional areas that need management.

Although staff will work to reopen all trails as soon as management is completed, closures may continue through mid-April. Visitors are welcome to use the White Oak Trail and Connector Trail as an alternative. The Visitor Center and outdoor restroom facilities will remain available.

The southern pine beetle, a bark beetle native to the southern U.S., has steadily expanded its range to the north, possibly due to climate change. Considered one of the most destructive forest pests in the United States, the beetle attacks all species of pine including pitch pine, the predominant species found in the Pine Barrens.

Beetle infestation was discovered at three locations on Long Island in 2014, and 8,000 trees have been damaged or killed on the refuge. The current suppression efforts at Wertheim will focus on the removal of trees with live beetles as opposed to dead trees that have already been vacated by beetles. The New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NY DEC) is the lead agency for broader suppression efforts.

The Service is committed to timely management of the infestation to maintain forest health. During the winter months, the beetles are dormant, but they will become active quickly in the spring and could spread to remaining healthy trees. To prevent this, beetle infested trees must be removed before spreading occurs.

NY DEC urges the public to report any recently dead pine they encounter in the Long Island area, especially if

there are several trees grouped together. Sightings should be reported to the Forest Health Diagnostic Lab through the toll-free information line, 1-866-640-0652 or by email, [foresthealth@dec.ny.gov](mailto:foresthealth@dec.ny.gov). If possible, accompany email reports with photos of the trees. An added item in the photo for scale, such as a penny, would help with identification.

Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1947, is located along the Carman's River in Suffolk County, New York. The Refuge protects one of the last undeveloped estuaries on Long Island. The founding purpose of the Refuge was to preserve habitat for migratory birds. Since that time, management programs have been expanded to other objectives, such as the protection of federally-listed endangered and threatened species, the conservation of native flora and fauna, and the provision of wildlife-dependent public uses.

For additional information, visit <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Wertheim/> or contact the Long Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex Office at 631-286-0485.

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