



"There have been erroneous and misleading statements made lately as to the Town's handling of the Pine Beetle Infestation. I have asked Roy Brownlow, Chief Code Official to reiterate his statements that have appeared in the Shoreline before and to set the record straight. His letter follows this statement. Please remember that any tree removal, other than on the Town's right-of-way, is done at the request of your Homeowner Associations or by the individual property owner."

C. Reese Musgrave, Mayor

First and foremost, the flyer does not offer any substantiation to the information that they are providing. For instance, what information does this person have to substantiate the claim that " ...their infestation has probably run its course."? This is in direct contrast with information provided by competent authorities (i.e. the county agriculture extension agent, the state forestry agents, literature on the beetles, etc.) that the beetle's infestation cycle can last as long as two years or more. In addition, reports by property owners to community officials imply that new infestations are still occurring in PKS.

True, not all pine trees are subject to insect infestation. However, in accordance with literature provided by the NC Agriculture Agency, "If the tree had its needles burnt off by the storms, but had new growth come back this summer, the tree is trying to recover. This type of tree is stressed and may be a candidate for the opportunistic pine beetles."

All decisions regarding cutting and removal of the pines in PKS have been made from the advice and suggestions from competent authorities. These authorities are the county agriculture extension agents, state forestry agents, technical literature from these agencies and other reliable sources. This information is and has been used to share and communicate information to property owners and assist the community officials with the arduous task of reviewing applications for tree removal. Furthermore, the work being done by public and private permit bearing contractors, has been reviewed by the community officials and appears to be in accordance with the advice given to community officials and the terms of the permits.

While some pines may have green needles, this does not necessarily mean the tree is not subject to infestation. According to information provided by the NC Forestry Service, "Attacked trees may remain green for longer periods during the winter. Beetles typically spread to new locations during the fall months. Many of these new locations remain undetected until late spring." In fact, according to the Southern Pine Beetle Information Directory (USDA), freshly attacked trees will still have normal, green looking foliage. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to detect early (stage 1) attacks. In addition, because of the "attractants" that these beetles produce, that the only feasible solution is thinning or removal of infested trees. Sprays can be used, but there are adverse side effects from the use of pesticides. The following is quoted from the NC Forestry Service:

"Prevention is the key to avoiding losses from beetle attack. Keeping trees healthy is the best defense. Studies have consistently shown that thinning dense stands is one of the most effective ways to reduce beetle-related timber loss. Properly thinned stands are not as susceptible to the beetle..."

According to the "tree experts", there are three points to consider when deciding to remove a tree.

First, consider the overall health of the tree. It should be vigorously growing with minimal broken branches and no signs of damage or decay. Foresters consider pines mature at 50 years. This is when the rate of growth slows considerable and more prone to beetle attack.

Second, the size of trees can present a hazard in that a larger tree will cause more damage if it falls.

Third, consider the distance from the tree to the house, driveway, decks, power lines (utilities). These are the areas where personal or property damage could occur.

If in doubt about the health of a tree, consult with a competent authority such as the county agriculture extension agent, botanist, horticulturist, forestry service agent, or a licensed landscape contractor.