

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 7, 2006

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: PROPOSED GYPSY MOTH SUPPRESSION PROGRAM FOR SPRING 2007

ISSUE: City Council consideration of the Gypsy Moth Suppression Program for spring 2007.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Schedule the proposed 2007 gypsy moth suppression program for public hearing and consideration on Saturday, January 20. (Staff will hold an open house prior to that date to provide the public an opportunity to gather information and ask staff questions about the program.) Staff will meet with the Northridge Civic Association about the proposal before the public hearing;
- (2) After the public hearing approve the program as recommended by staff with the following components:
 1. Aerial application of Bacillus thuringiensis (B.t.) over one spray block totaling 75 acres that includes 319 properties located in the Beverley Hills community bounded by South Overlook Drive on the north, Old Dominion Boulevard on the east, Allison Street on the south and Wellington Road on the west (Attachment 1) in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS);
 2. Declaration that the aerial and ground spray programs are to be voluntary, that a 200-foot buffer zone will be maintained around the property of any resident or property owner objecting to the aerial application over their residence or property;
 3. Notification off all residents and property owners within the proposed spray block and buffer area;
 4. Voluntary ground spray of B.t. for susceptible tree species located on properties within the 200-foot buffer zone created by an objecting property owner;

5. Authorization for the City Manager to submit the State and federal funding applications and to enter into the required agreements for the Gypsy Moth Suppression program and file the required congested area flight plan and,
6. Implementation of other gypsy moth suppression measures to include the distribution of burlap for banding trees and educational materials in cooperation with VDACS.

BACKGROUND: Alexandria's gypsy moth suppression program began in 1988 with the spraying of 1,200 acres throughout the City, when hundreds of trees were sustaining serious damage from gypsy moth infestation. The suppression program was most intensive in 1989 when 1,800 acres were sprayed. Subsequently, spray areas varied from 400 acres in 1990 to 200 acres in 1991, to 100 acres in 1992, to 96 acres in 1993, to 57 acres in 1994 and to 44 acres in 1995. In 1998 two trees on the public right-of-way were treated by ground spray application of B.t. The steady reduction of the gypsy moth population during the past several years has been attributed to the development of beneficial fungal and viral diseases, as well as insect parasites that were able to suppress the growth of the gypsy moth population. The development and effectiveness of these naturally occurring controls is heavily dependent upon favorable environmental factors including temperature and rainfall during critical periods of the gypsy moths' development.

The egg mass survey conducted by the City in the fall of 2001 identified two potential spray blocks consisting of 46 acres in the Seminary Valley area and 50 acres surrounding the Virginia Theological Seminary. The program subsequently was cancelled due to flight restrictions imposed by the Federal Aviation Administration and Department of Homeland Security for security reasons following September 11, 2001. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) still maintains a 5-mile "Flight Restriction Zone" around Ronald Reagan National Airport. As a result, Alexandria will require a waiver from the TSA for permission for the necessary aircraft to fly and apply spray within the restricted zone.

A resurgence of the gypsy moth population has occurred throughout Northern Virginia. Fairfax County proposes to spray approximately 4,220 acres, and Prince William County proposes to spray more than 5,000 acres in the spring of 2007.

DISCUSSION: The proposed suppression program is based on the results of an annual gypsy moth egg mass survey of approximately 100 City sites that have historically experienced significant gypsy moth infestations. The Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities completed the survey in November 2006. Results of this survey were used to determine the extent and severity of the City's gypsy moth infestation, as well as to develop options for treatment of areas which qualify for spraying under the VDACS program. The following are the options considered for the proposed program:

1. **No Pesticides**
Application of no *Bacillus thuringiensis* or any other product and only the distribution of burlap banding and educational materials to the public;
2. **Voluntary Aerial Application of *Bacillus thuringiensis* – no ground spray**
Aerial application of *Bacillus thuringiensis* (B.t.) in one spray block of 75 acres, combined with the distribution of burlap banding and educational materials to the public.

B.t. is a naturally occurring bacterium that is registered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for use in the suppression of gypsy moth caterpillars in forested residential, commercial and industrial areas. According to EPA evaluations, people, pets, wildlife (terrestrial and aquatic) and beneficial insects are not harmed in any way by this insecticide.

The qualifying area has significant gypsy moth infestation and consists of 75 acres that includes 319 properties bounded by South Overlook Drive on the north, Old Dominion Boulevard on the east, Allison Street on the south and Wellington Road on the west. This program would be voluntary, and a 200-foot buffer “no aerial spray area” would be established around any property where the owner and/or resident objects to the aerial spray application. **No ground spray applications of pesticides would be offered to treat those properties located within that 200 foot buffer area.**

3. **Voluntary Aerial or Ground Application of B.t.**
Aerial application of B.t. in one spray block, combined with the distribution of burlap banding and educational materials to the public. This would be done in the same 75 acres that is described above. This program would be voluntary, and a 200-foot buffer “no aerial spray area” would be established around any property where the owner and/or resident objects to the aerial spray application. Properties located within that 200-foot buffer will be eligible for the ground spray application of B.t. by a contractor hired by the City. Properties within the 200-foot buffer will be required to request to be ground sprayed in order to “**opt-in**” to this part of the suppression program.

Staff recommends that Council adopt Option three: the aerial application of B.t. over the qualifying spray block, the voluntary ground spray application of B.t. within the buffer areas of objecting properties, and the distribution of burlap bands and educational materials to the public. Burlap for banding trees City-wide and educational materials will be available to the public in May and June at the Lee Center located at 1108 Jefferson Street; the Jerome “Buddie” Ford Nature

Center located at 5700 Sanger Avenue; and Fire Station No. 53 located at 2801 Cameron Mills Road. Banding trees with burlap helps monitor gypsy moth larvae and determine levels of infestation. Residents who band their trees will be reminded that they must inspect the bands and remove larvae on a regular basis for this program to be effective.

In November 2006, City staff submitted a proposal to VDACS to participate in the 2007 Virginia Cooperative Gypsy Moth Suppression Program. The State requires that the spray block have a minimum of 250 egg masses per acre, the presence of primary and secondary host tree species, and the potential for additional infestation from adjacent communities (i.e. caterpillars being wind borne into the City from Arlington and Fairfax Counties). The City's proposed suppression Program meets these requirements, qualifying the City to participate in the program and receive federal funding for a portion of the program.

In the winter of 2006, City staff will submit a request the USDA Forest Service, Forest Health Protection to present a waiver request to fly inside the restricted DC flight restriction zone. The waiver request requires specific information about the aircraft used, and the pilot, crew, and passengers. The Transportation Security Administration will review the request and will approve or deny the request in spring 2007 at the time the State is scheduled to enter into a contract with a qualified aerial applicator company.

The estimated cost of the 2007 Gypsy Moth Suppression Program is \$24,432 (Attachment 2). The City's share of the projected cost is \$12,966. The estimated Federal share of the cost is \$11,466, which covers one half of the aerial application cost, and one half of City Staff costs to conduct the egg mass survey and program administration. Final reimbursement by the USDA Forest Services, Forest Health and Protection will be contingent upon approval of Federal funding.

FISCAL IMPACT: The estimated cost of the suppression program is \$24,432. Federal funding is projected to account for \$11,466 of the total cost, reducing the City's cost to \$12,966. The FY 2007 Budget includes \$7,751 for gypsy moth suppression. Personnel costs (\$8,100) are covered by the tree maintenance budget. The balance of the funds needed will be reallocated from other budgeted sources.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1. 2007 Gypsy Moth Suppression Program Spray Block Map

Attachment 2. 2007 Gypsy Moth Suppression Program Estimated Costs

STAFF:

Michele Evans, Deputy City Manager

Kirk Kincannon, Director, RPCA

Roger Blakeley, Deputy Director, RPCA

John Noelle, City Arborist, RPCA

2007 GYPSY MOTH SUPPRESSION PROGRAM**ESTIMATED COSTS**

	FEDERAL SHARE	CITY SHARE
AERIAL SPRAY SUPPRESSION PROGRAM		
Aerial spray application (75 acres @ \$44.88/acre)	\$ 3,366.00	\$ 3,366.00
MAILINGS, NOTIFICATIONS, AND SUPPLIES		
Printing costs (300 pieces)		\$ 100.00
Postal costs (300 pieces)		\$ 100.00
Advertisement		\$ 300.00
PERSONNEL COSTS		
Egg mass survey and suppression program	\$8,100.00	\$ 8,100.00
CONFERENCE AND BOOKS		
Conferences and meetings.		\$ 1,000.00
	_____	_____
TOTALS	\$11,466.00	\$12,966.00