



## State of New Jersey

### DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

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#### MEMORANDUM

CHRIS CHRISTIE  
GOVERNOR

KIM GUADAGNO  
Lt. Governor

BOB MARTIN  
COMMISSIONER

TO: Bob Martin, Commissioner  
Department of Environmental Protection

FROM: Amy Cradic, Assistant Commissioner  
Natural and Historic Resources

DATE: February 8, 2012

RE: Bull's Island Recreation Area Tree Assessment Update

#### Primary Facts:

- As a result of the fatality that occurred at the upper river campground at Bull's Island Recreation Area on June 28, 2011, Bartlett Tree Experts was contracted to perform a tree risk inventory of the larger trees in the up-river portion of the recreation area.
- Bartlett Arborists visited Bull's Island Recreational Area during three occasions: July 14 and July 15 2011, and July 26, 2011.
- Based on the failure of a large sycamore in 2011, the subsequent tree inventory, and examination of the root collars of the trees, the contractor concluded that a majority of trees do pose a high to critical risk of failure in the area of investigation (report attached).
- The upper river section of Bull's Island where the tree failure occurred has been closed since the incident in 2011.
- Day use activities in the lower river section of Bull's Island Recreation remain open, such as the use of the boat ramp and picnic area.
- Significant storm debris remains in the closed upper river area of Bull's Island as a result of Hurricane Irene.

**Actions:**

- Based on the consultant report and a technical review by DEP forestry experts, we are proceeding with removing all vegetative material in the upper river section of Bull's Island.
- Once the area is cleared, the Department will proceed with replanting the area with appropriate floodplain vegetation that matures at smaller heights and does not pose a public safety risk.
- Camping in the upper river section will be permanently closed. Upon restoration the area will serve as a natural area. Demolition of the bathhouse and other camping features is required.
- Field foresters from the northern region have made a preliminary visit to the site to assess the value of the wood and the site conditions. They are actively identifying all merchantable trees in the upper river campsite area and creating an inventory list in preparation of the bid.
- Because of the potential for metal and defects in the butt log of trees in recreational areas, the value of the standing trees is less than forest trees. In addition, the width of the bridge access to the island is too narrow for full size log trucks so staging and logging costs may be higher than normal. The anticipated result of these factors is that the logging operation may end up being a no-cost operation rather than one that will produce income.
- An assessment for Thousand Canker Disease (TCD) will also be done on the trees in the upper section of Bull's Island. Since TCD was discovered right across the Delaware River in Bucks County, PA the Bull's Island site was identified as a possible survey location for the disease.
- A risk assessment for the lower river campsites and other areas of Bull's Island will be conducted to determine if further tree removal action is necessary.
- Camping season for 2012 will be closed in the lower river area to allow the tree assessment and other clean up activities.
- DEP will need to post information on its website and announce that 2012 camping season is closed in the lower river area and permanently closed in the upper river area.
- DEP will contact qualified New Jersey State Universities to inquire if they would partner with the DEP in developing a restoration landscape plan for the upper river area.
- The lower river campsites and other day use areas will need to be evaluated periodically for tree risk and maintained to ensure public safety.
- Long-term – DEP is evaluating an acquisition of another site to create a new camping area at Bull's Island, but not along the Delaware River.