**PUBLIC INPUT NOTICE ON GYPSY MOTH**

**WHO:** Residents of Gates County and Camden County

**WHAT:** Public Input Meeting to Discuss an Infestation of Gypsy Moth in the Area

**WHEN:** Monday, January 30, 2017, 7:00 pm

**WHERE:** Sunbury Volunteer Fire Department Number 2, 250 Parker’s Fork Road, Corapeake, NC 27926

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) Plant Industry Division has scheduled a public meeting on Monday, January 30 at 7:00 pm at the Sunbury Volunteer Fire Department Number 2 in Corapeake. The purpose of the meeting is to permit NCDA&CS staff to provide information on a gypsy moth infestation that has been detected in your area, review treatment alternatives for the infestation, and to receive input from the public. The meeting format will provide adequate time for questions and public comments.

No decision will be made on the treatment alternatives for this infestation until residents of the area have had an opportunity to express their comments through this public meeting. All members of the public are encouraged to attend.

If you are not able to attend the meeting and you would like additional information on this gypsy moth infestation, please contact the NCDA&CS Plant Industry Division at 800-206-9333 or 919-707-3730. Resources are also online at the NCDA&CS web site: <http://www.ncagr.gov/gypsymoth>

**HISTORY AND BIOLOGY OF THE GYPSY MOTH**

The gypsy moth, *Lymantria dispar L*., is native to northern Africa, Europe, and parts of Asia and is a defoliator of hardwood trees. The gypsy moth first invaded the U.S. in 1869 when it escaped from a laboratory in Medford, Massachusetts where attempts were being made to cross it with native silkworm moths. Since that time, the insect has spread throughout the northeastern and mid-Atlantic U.S. and into Canada. The gypsy moth earned its name because of its behavior and tremendous mobility. Several days after hatching, young caterpillars hang from tree limbs by silk threads that allow them to be carried aloft by wind currents and spread to other areas. Although the gypsy moth can spread relatively short distances on its own, it is also transported by humans. Man-assisted movement occurs when humans transport egg masses which can contain as many as 1,000 viable eggs. In the forest, adult female moths hide their egg masses in a variety of places, including bark crevices, tree holes, and under vines on tree trunks. However, when the gypsy moth invades areas inhabited or used by people, these hiding places frequently include outdoor articles such as tents, firewood, doghouses, utility sheds, garbage cans, lawn furniture, and recreational vehicles.

**IMPACT OF THE GYPSY MOTH**

The impact of a gypsy moth infestation varies year to year. The direct impact of gypsy moth defoliation ranges from barely noticeable to devastating, depending upon population density, tree health, and weather conditions. For hardwood species such as oak, mortality of trees in fair or poor health, or those stressed by drought or frost, can occur after two consecutive years of defoliation. Trees that are in good condition will grow new leaves later in the season but they use food reserves that were intended for the next season. Reduction in food reserves in trees reduces their ability to withstand future defoliation or stress. The most dangerous effect of gypsy moth defoliation is an increase in tree susceptibility to secondary pests such as wood boring beetles and fungi. Older gypsy moth larvae may attack conifer species, such as pines, resulting in tree mortality after just one year of defoliation. The economic burden of a severe gypsy moth defoliation can be great when homeowners are faced with a number of large, dead yard trees that must be removed. Likewise, timberland owners may be faced with a reduction in timber value as valuable hardwoods are killed.

The gypsy moth can also be a nuisance to the general public. In heavily infested areas, caterpillars may crawl on driveways, sidewalks, outdoor furniture, into homes, or end up in swimming pools. In parks and recreation areas, defoliation may affect the aesthetics of the surroundings. If inhaled, some people can have allergic reactions to the caterpillars’ tiny hairs.

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED TREATMENT AREA**

The Slow the Spread (STS) Pilot Project was begun in 1992 with a goal of demonstrating that the rate at which gypsy moth populations colonize new areas can be reduced. The project uses techniques that are both environmentally safe and cost effective. This pilot program became operational in 2000. Management decisions within STS are primarily based on the presence of male gypsy moths in any given area, determined by utilizing traps baited with the female gypsy moth sex pheromone. The project currently operates in portions of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, North Carolina, Minnesota, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

**Corapeake area:** This 10,127 acre proposed treatment block in Gates and Camden County is centered around the community of Corapeake. The northern edge of this block runs along the NC/VA Stateline. The eastern edge is in the Dismal Swamp. Highway 32 runs North to South through the block. There are approximately 400 residencies along with numerous churches, farms, and small businesses. The area is predominantly rural with a mix of woods and farmland. Forests are composed of pine, oak, hickory, gum, cypress, willow, poplar, and other species. A pattern of high moth catches in 2016 (up to 13 moths captured per trap) across the block indicates a reproducing low- to moderate-level gypsy moth population is present. Additionally, Virginia has experienced high catches on their side of the state line and proposes to treat their infestation in conjunction with the proposed treatment in North Carolina. One application of mating disruption is proposed for this block.

