



May 20, 2026

Joshua Smith
Airport Manager
Francis S. Gabreski Airport
Administration Building #1
Westhampton Beach, NY 11978

RE: Suffolk County Gabreski Airport – Southern Pine Beetle Dead Trees
Central Pine Barrens Compatible Growth Area

Dear Mr. Smith:

On May 7, 2026, the Central Pine Barrens Commission received your letter requesting to cut and leave in place dead pitch pine trees infested by Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) that pose a safety and security hazard to the Gabreski Airport property.

The letter explains that dead trees may be hazardous and fall on the existing fenceline, road or passersby on the southerly boundary of Gabreski Airport in the portion of the property that is in the Central Pine Barrens Compatible Growth Area. The Gabreski Airport Master Plan, included in the submission, illustrates areas to be developed and areas to remain natural. The SPB infested dead trees are in the area to remain natural. An estimated 1,160 trees were identified as infested and potentially hazardous. The Applicant will leave the cut trees in place to undergo natural degradation. A cost estimate was provided for the County to hire a contractor for this work.

Commission staff reviewed the proposal including photographs, and at its May 20, 2026 meeting, the Commission authorized the felling of the trees. Based on the information provided the proposed activity is consistent with past precedent of the Commission and authorizations on other properties where similar conditions exist. This determination is not an evaluation of the risks, if any, to the property posed by vegetation on the site. The Commission makes no representation as to the same as it only reviewed the areas identified in your submission. The Commission is not qualified to make such a determination.

Please be advised, despite the presence of hazardous condition, the timing of cutting and removing trees may be restricted to seasonal periods to protect the Northern Long-eared Bat, a New York State and Federal listed Endangered species. Please consult with NYSDEC to adhere to protective guidelines and requirements for this and other listed species and regulated habitats on the property. The Commission has no control over such requirements.

The proposal must conform to all other involved agency jurisdictions and permit requirements in effect on the project site. Thank you for your attention. Please contact this office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Julie Hargrave
Interim Executive Director

624 Old Riverhead Road
Westhampton Beach, NY
11978

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cc: John C. Milazzo, Counsel to the Commission
Janice Scherer, Southampton Town Planning and Development Administrator
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Region 1