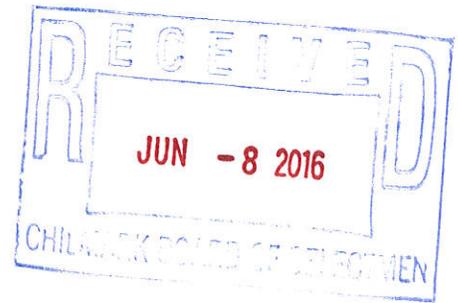


June 8, 2016

The Chilmark Board of Selectmen
Town Hall
Chilmark, MA 02535



Gentlemen,

Last week's Vineyard Gazette brought news of Eversource Electric's intention to undertake major tree clearing along the Vineyard's scenic roads. There are fewer things that have the potential to change the character of our scenic roads as this kind of activity. It is important for clearing to be done at regular intervals to maintain a level of clearance to the power lines to avoid the problems that can and do arise when clearing is not done.

I watched as the various trees, numbering in the hundreds, were marked with blue flagging tape. Many are on the opposite side of the road from the power lines. Some are clearly on private property. Many tree species, including pine, have been marked for removal. In my experience the Cynipid gall wasp affects our local Oak trees, yet many maples, pines, and other species of trees now have been flagged.

I have lived in Chilmark now for over 40 years and have seen clearing done over and over again by the electric company in all of its iterations. Years ago the work was done with a great deal of care with three objectives. One is the safety of the lines, the second to ensure the health of the trees, and the third is to ensure the beauty of the roads. This thoughtful "triple bottom line" approach was undertaken with the help of the many electric company employees living on the island who had a stake because it had an impact on their quality of life.

Over the years that thoughtful approach has fallen to a very haphazard methodology that has actually cut trees in such a callous way as to guarantee their eventual death. This is evident when entire crowns had been removed without any regard to whether a tree would survive. This downward evolution in the approach to this work has occurred at the same time the nature of the electric company has changed. It is quite clear that the work is driven by the economics without the consideration of the very issues that have such major impacts to islanders' quality

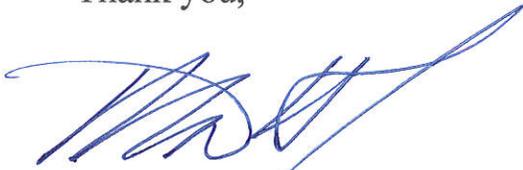
of life. Eversource has downsized its' island workforce and no longer has the same stakeholder position.

Once this work is done there is no going back. We have an opportunity to review a number of the aspects of the job. At the very least we might review the number of trees that have been tagged to ensure that it is necessary to remove each one. We can oversee the work to minimize potential impacts to the character of the roadways. And finally, we can make sure any work done to our trees is done in a way to ensure the health of the remaining trees.

It is not my intention to stop the clearing that is vital to a safe power grid but to ensure any work done takes into account a spectrum of consideration that runs beyond basic economics. We are lucky to have a number of certified arborists living on the island. My guess is that there might be one or two who would be interested in being involved. Since this will affect more than more town it seems prudent to ask for some degree of oversight in conjunction with the other towns. It should be addressed as a regional issue before lasting damage is done.

I hope you will consider this issue very carefully.

Thank you,



David Damroth

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