

SHELBY TOWNSHIP PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Shelby Township Supervisor Rick Stathakis Phone: (586) 731-5154
Email: rstathakis@shelbytwp.org Website: www.shelbytwp.org

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Consumers Energy to trim, remove trees along Stony Creek trail in Shelby Township

Consumers Energy's Forestry Operations department will be conducting some brush clearing and tree removal along the Stony Creek Trail between Dequindre and Shelby Roads in the month of March.

The vegetation management plan calls for the removal of some small trees and brush along the trail that runs east and west north of 25 mile Road. While there are some large trees that will have to be removed for safety within the easement that runs over a large natural gas transfer line, it will not be blanket clear-cut approach and many of the larger older trees within the easement will be untouched.

"I am very appreciative that Consumers Energy is taking the approach of leaving as many of the larger, older trees as they can untouched," Township Supervisor Rick Stathakis said after touring the affected area with Parks Recreation Director Joe Youngblood and Daniel Whitman from Consumers Energy's Forestry Operations department.

"It is a beautiful trail that is frequented by our residents throughout the Township on their way to enjoy Stony Creek Metropark and the Macomb Orchard Trail, so, thankfully, much of the natural splendor of that trail will be unaffected."

Vegetation management is planned for the length of the pipeline from a compressor station in Oakland County east to New Baltimore. Trees with large root systems must be cleared to avoid possible safety hazards.

"Some of these larger trees grow deeper and could come into contact with the large volume gas transfer lines," Shelby Township Fire Chief Jim Swinkowski said. "These trees can actually be struck by lightning and conduct that lightning to the gas line, which could be disastrous."

The trimming and tree removal is no way related to the exploratory oil well that was put in place by West Bay Exploration in 2014. Consumers Energy, and Whitman said the work, while overdue along this line, is, "routine maintenance."

"We keep the vegetation off of the lines to allow the leak surveyors to walk the lines to check for leaks as well as for safety," Whitman said in an email. "As time passes tree root interaction with the pipe can compromise the integrity of the pipe's structure, increasing the odds for possible (not to be confused with probable) failure. This is considered routine maintenance on our end, although we have not cleared this particular area in a few years."

The trimming and tree removal will be kept to the south side of the trail and not affect any of the vegetation that abuts residential homes just north of the trail.

"We'll be doing some trimming on the north side to take down some the branches that hang over the trail and are hazardous to walkers, bikers and joggers," Youngblood said. "We know this trail is very popular among our residents, and it was a relief to hear that Consumers Energy is taking that into consideration with their vegetation management plan."

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