The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Department of Conservation

Insect Pest Control

15 Ashburton Place, Boston 8

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1956 OF THE BUREAU OF INSECT PEST CONTROL

For the budget year 1956 this Bureau completed two aerial spray programs - one for the Hemlock Looper in Barnstable County completed in August, 1955 and the second for Gypsy Moth Control completed in May, 1956. A report of the Looper activity was submitted upon completion but as new members of the Board may not have same, extra copies are attached.

Annual vacations followed the completion of the Looper program and the defoliation survey, and then all personnel concentrated on the fall removal of condemned elm trees. The removal load was considerably increased over 1954 and would have been far beyond our capabilities had more towns complied with the scouting schedule. But the increase in the cooperative towns alone taxed our limits, even though we were fortunate in losing very little storm time throughout the winter months. Our biggest problem was maintaining equipment such as power chain saws, winches, etc. With equipment purchased in 1950 and 1951, used continuously much of it is beyond further economical repair. Under present budget information it appears that this problem will increase - neither funds for repairs nor funds for new equipment seems to be indicated. Actually our assistance rating is decreasing as the demands upon us are increasing. Also, in similar ratio, our shortage of proper personnel continues while additional

duties are imposed upon us.

During the winter the proposed aerial spray program for Gypsy Moth for the spring was prepared. The final schedule was considerably less than originally anticipated, with the total output calling for some 75,000 gallons of insecticide. The area for treatment included all trap spots which caught live moths in 1955, concentrated in Plymouth and Barnstable Counties, plus an area on Martha's Vineyard and all of October Mountain state property. The gallonage involved would indicate a one-week project, but between the constant move from one trap site to the next and the most miserable wind conditions we have ever experienced it actually consumed five weeks to complete the treatment of 121,000 acres. Only three plots were of sufficient size to warrant the economical use of a large plane and only one, a B-17 with 2700 gallon capacity was used. The balance was handled by Stearmans and Piper Cubs. The high winds already referred to caused much delay to both the large and small planes, as most of the time the wind was a steady drive at zero to half-mile level. Small planes couldn't work under, nor the large plane over, this solid wall. This was the first time we haven't been able to keep planes at work somewhere in a project - in this case the entire county was closed to us for hours at a time. All were happy to see the last gallon applied on May 29th.

As of mid-July there are no visual indications of missed areas, but even a careful defoliation survey will not give us the usual dependable forecase of conditions for 1957. The overlap of oak damage by the late frost still has the deceptive appearance of gypsy defoliation, even from the air. Every suspected forested block and hillside must be inspected on foot this year. A much clearer picture of the infestation conditions will be obtained, of course, in the trapping area but for the entire state

our defoliation survey period will have to continue right up to pupation time.

While it is still too early to submit even an estimate it would seem safe to state that no areas of large proportion will require aerial treatment in 1957, and if this remains correct it may be possible for us to clean out all of the small infestations during the next season.

H. L. Ramsey

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Chief Superintendent

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