



# MEMORANDUM

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**Date:** October 23, 2015

**To:** Joel Bush – Maryland State Highway Administration

**From:** Greg O'Hare, L.P.F., MD LTE #511, ISA Certified Arborist #MA-3158A, ISA TRAQ

**CC:** Joe Vervier – SHA  
Ken Schmidt – Mahan-Rykiel  
Rick Maddox – RK&K

**Re:** MD 28 Champion Tree Health Assessment Memorandum  
Contract 2007-17F Task 21 (FMIS # – PCA – 23843)

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## SUMMARY

The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) requested a tree health assessment for two champion trees within SHA Right-of-Way (ROW) adjacent to Darnestown Rd (MD 28) in Darnestown, MD. Tree 1 (T1) is a 59" diameter at breast height (DBH) Kentucky Coffeetree (*Gymnocladus dioica*) in poor overall condition with high overall and residual tree risk ratings. Tree 2 (T2) is a 79" DBH Northern Catalpa (*Catalpa speciosa*) in very poor overall condition with high overall and residual tree risk ratings. Both trees are recommended for removal.

## INTRODUCTION

Greg O'Hare conducted a tree condition and risk assessment on two champion trees located along MD 28, at the request of the SHA Landscape Operations Division. The trees are located in front of 14001 Darnestown Rd. within the SHA right-of-way and adjacent to the Darnestown Heritage Park. SHA installed a split rail fence around the area to protect the trees from foot and vehicle traffic. SHA requested this tree assessment in response to concerns raised by local citizens regarding the potentially hazardous condition of the trees. The 59" Kentucky Coffeetree (T1) is a specimen tree that may be eligible for champion status, and the 79" Northern Catalpa (T2) is a former county and state champion tree (2011). The locations of the trees and potential targets are shown on the attached Field Survey Map.

## METHODS

The health and condition of the two champion trees were assessed by an ISA Certified Arborist using current arboriculture industry standards and International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) best management practices. Our arborist is also ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualified (TRAQ) and he conducted a tree risk assessment following those criteria. The following data were recorded for each tree:

- ✓ Location
- ✓ Photographs
- ✓ Species (common and scientific names)
- ✓ DBH – diameter at breast height
- ✓ Tree height & canopy spread

- ✓ Detailed health assessment of crown/branches, trunk, roots and root collar
- ✓ ISA basic tree risk assessment form

The tree locations for each tree were surveyed using a GPS equipped iPad, and are shown on the Field Survey Map. The diameter of each tree was measured using a DBH tape, and photos were taken to document tree condition. See attached photo log.

## FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### TREE 1 (T1)

Tree 1 (T1) is a 59" DBH Kentucky Coffeetree (*Gymnocladus dioica*) that is located just west of the driveway at 14001 Darnestown Road. T1 is approximately 95 feet tall, with a crown spread of 96 feet. Lightning protection was observed on the north side of the tree, as shown in the attached photo log. This tree is in poor overall condition and exhibiting crown decline due to age and significant decay in the trunk and co-dominant leaders. **A significant vertical crack (approximately 6' long and 1"-12" wide) has developed in the trunk just below the union of several co-dominant leaders, and the entire eastern portion (right side looking from MD 28) of the tree has split and is shifting toward the driveway and MD 28.** Response growth around the crack is minor. A large column of decay was confirmed in the trunk through visual assessment, probing with a 4' section of rebar, and sounding with a rubber mallet. **It is estimated that approximately 2/3 of the stem diameter is decayed and the decay likely extends into the trunk/root collar union.** Cavities and decay were also observed just above the co-dominant leader unions with the trunk, and on a large lead (16" diameter) hanging over MD 28. **There is significant loading on these defects due to the weight of the mature canopy.**

Targets are people, property, or activities that could be injured, damaged, or disrupted by a tree failure. Targets within close proximity of T1 include the traveling public on MD 28, residents/visitors in yards or driveway at 14001 and 13909 (including a school bus stop at the end of the driveway near 13909 Darnestown Rd.), powerlines on the southern side of MD 28, residence at 13920 Darnestown Rd., and the residence at 13909 Darnestown Rd. T1 was assigned a high overall tree risk rating due to significant defects with probable failure that would have severe consequences to human life and property. **The highest risk is associated with failure of the eastern portion of the tree that is within striking distance of MD 28 and the driveway at 14001 and 13909 that also functions as a school bus stop.** There is also moderate risk associated with failure of the western portion of the tree (left side looking from MD 28) and the decaying co-dominant lead over MD 28.

**Tree 1 is recommended for removal due to high overall tree and residual risk to the traveling public and adjacent residents and their properties.** Bracing of the trunk, cabling of the co-dominant leads, crown reduction to reduce loading, and fertilization are possible (\$6,000-\$10,000, with additional costs for monitoring and maintenance), but not recommended for T1 due to extensive trunk decay and declining overall health. Bracing and cabling can negatively affect the load dynamics of large mature trees, resulting in increased loading on the lower trunk and roots. In addition, overall tree health is not likely to improve dramatically with the application of bio-stimulants and/or fertilizer, in conjunction with crown reduction.

### TREE 2 (T2)

Tree 2 (T2) is a 79" DBH Northern Catalpa (*Catalpa speciosa*) that is located west of T1, directly in front of 14001 Darnestown Rd, and adjacent to Darnestown Heritage Park. T2 is approximately 70 feet tall, with a crown spread of 84 feet. Lightning protection was observed on the east side of the tree, as shown in the attached photo log. **This tree is in very poor condition and is exhibiting major crown decline due to age and significant decay in the trunk and root collar.** Response growth is low, which is another indicator of overall decline in vigor. A major column of decay was confirmed in the trunk through visual assessment, probing with a 4' section of rebar, and sounding with a rubber mallet. **It is estimated that approximately 3/4 of the trunk diameter is decayed and the decay extends into the root collar.** Missing bark, decay, and dieback were also observed in the canopy. Four cables were installed in the canopy by others to provide structural support, but the function of this

hardware may be compromised due to decay and dieback. **There is significant loading on the defects described above due to the weight of the mature canopy.**

Targets within close proximity of T2 include the traveling public on MD 28, residents/visitors in the yard at 14001 Darnestown Rd., powerlines on the southern side of MD 28, and Darnestown Heritage Park users. T2 was assigned a high overall tree risk rating due to significant defects with probable failure that would have severe consequences to human life and property. **The highest risks are associated with failure of the entire tree or failure of the front half of the tree (closest to MD 28) that are within striking distance of MD 28 and the powerlines on the southern side of MD 28.** There is also moderate risk associated with failure of the co-dominant lead over MD 28 that has internal decay.

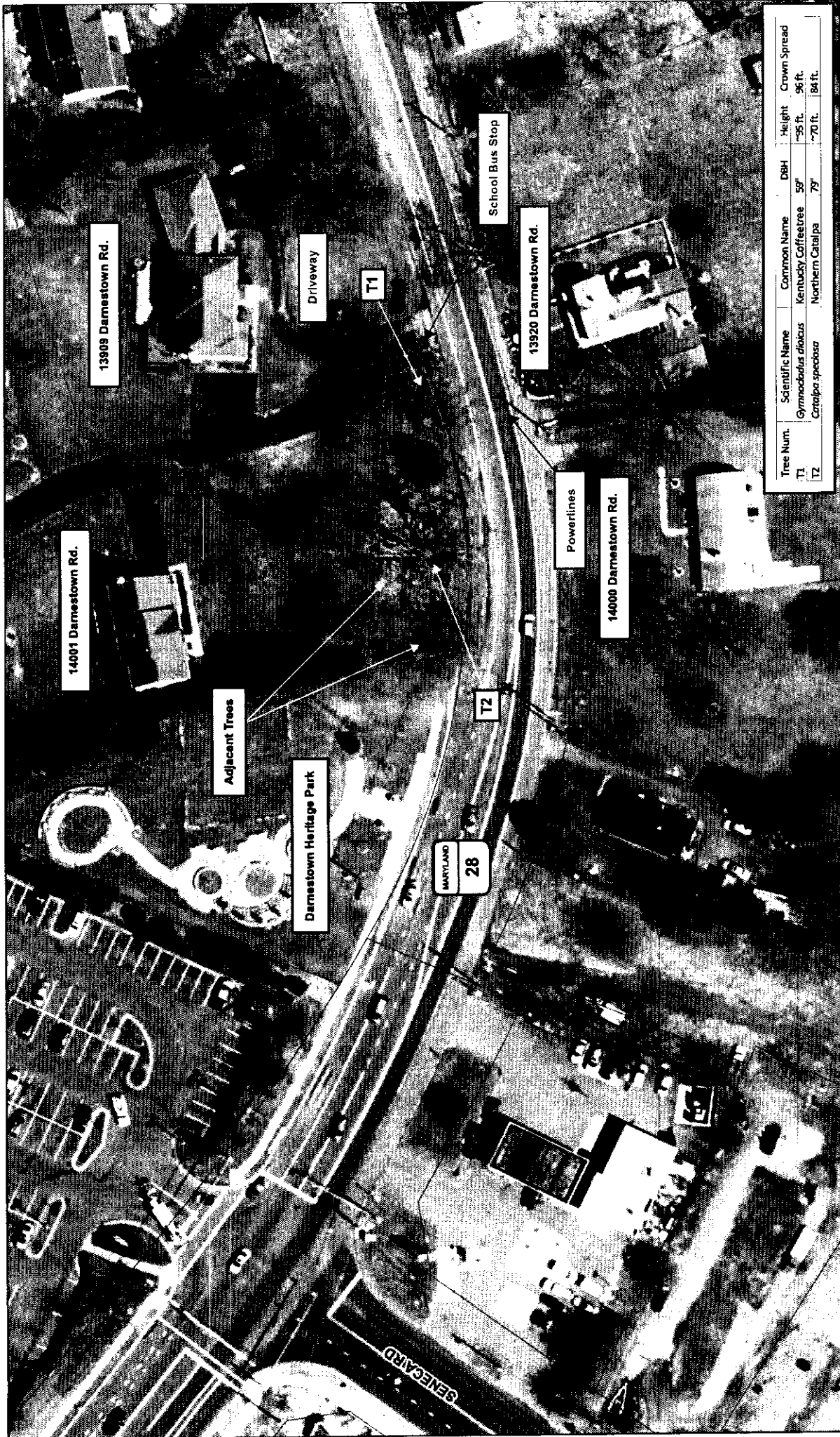
**Tree 2 is recommended for removal due to high overall tree and residual risk to the traveling public and adjacent residents and their properties.** Remedial activities for whole tree failure are not recommended for Tree 2 due to extensive trunk decay and declining overall health.

Attachments: Field Survey Map

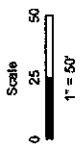
Photo Log

ISA Basic Tree Risk Assessment Forms

Arborist Credentials



Tree Num.	Scientific Name	Common Name	DBH	Height	Crown Spread
T1	<i>Gymnocladia dioica</i>	Kentucky Coffeetree	58"	~95 ft.	96 ft.
T2	<i>Catalpa speciosa</i>	Northern Catalpa	79"	~70 ft.	84 ft.



**MD 28 CHAMPION TREE ASSESSMENT  
FIELD SURVEY - DARNESTOWN, MD  
OCTOBER 14th, 2015**



SHA Fence

Champion Tree

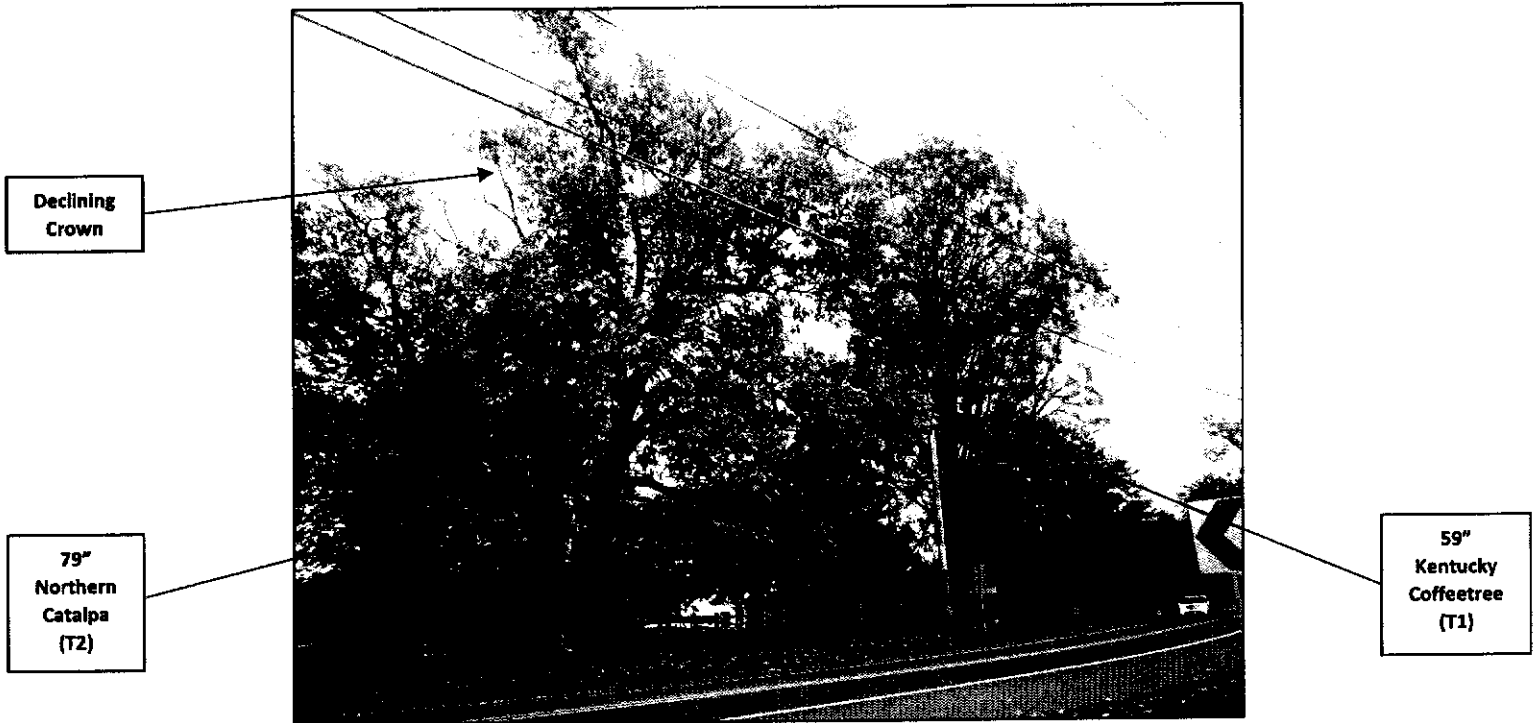


Photo 1. Facing northeast along Darnestown Rd. towards 59" Kentucky coffeetree (T1) and 79" northern catalpa tree (T2).

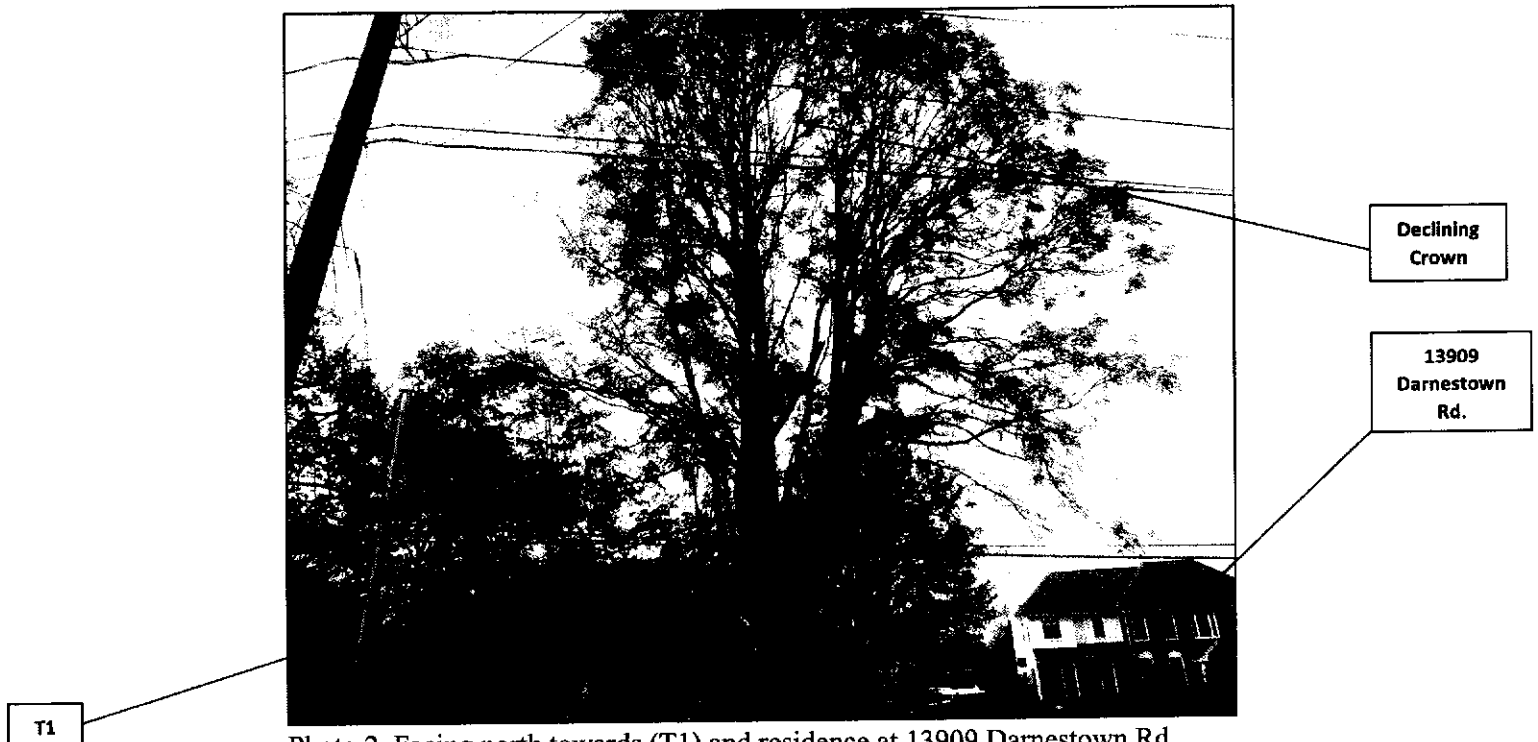


Photo 2. Facing north towards (T1) and residence at 13909 Darnestown Rd.



Photo 3. Facing west along Darnestown Rd. towards T1.

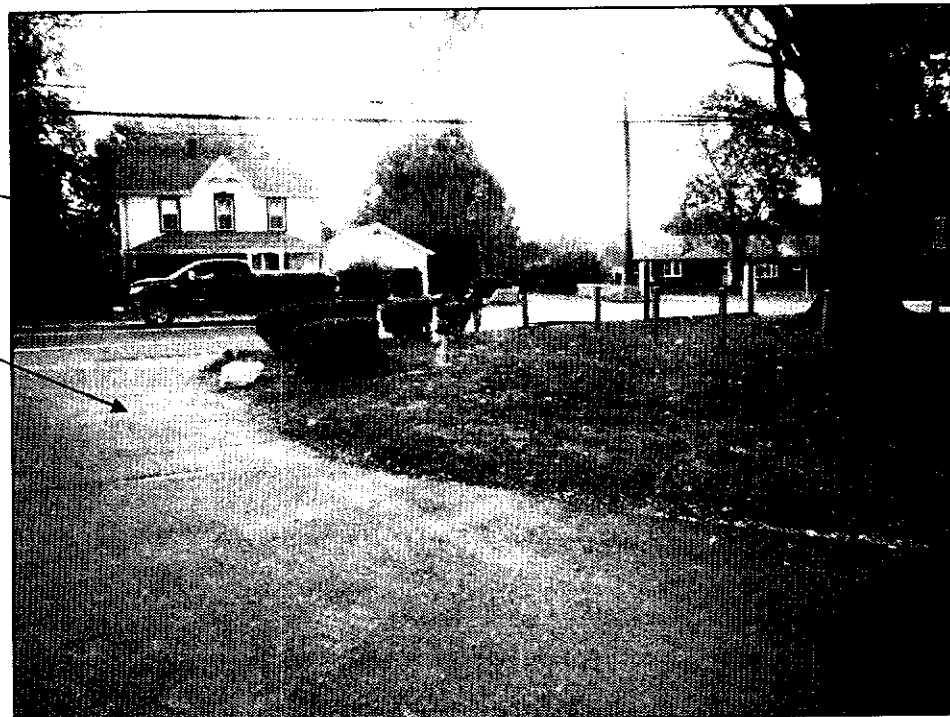
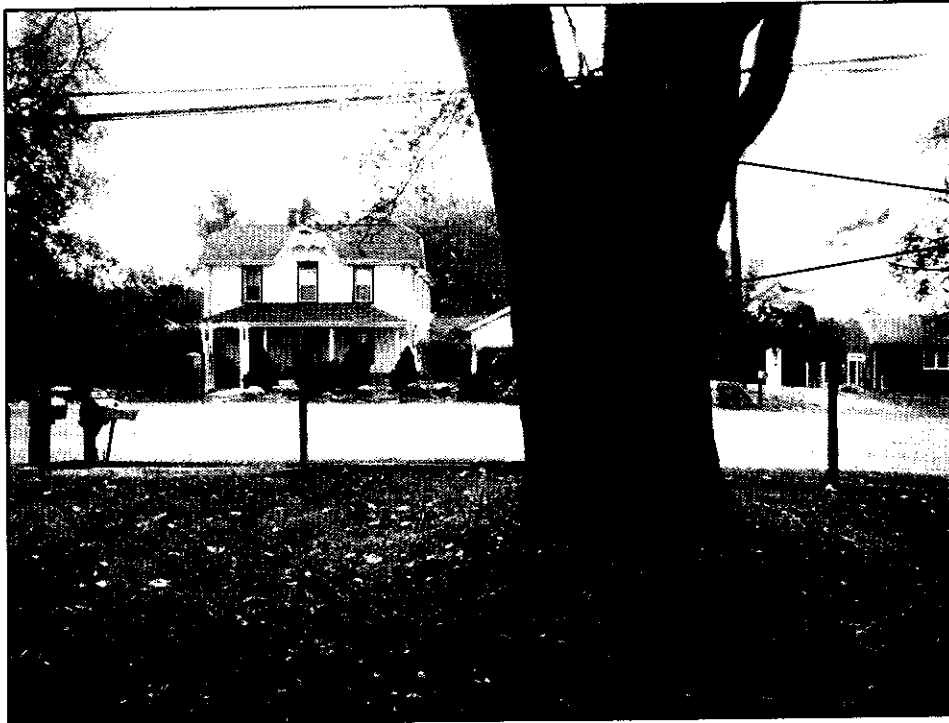


Photo 4. Facing south towards residence at 13920 Darnestown Rd. and school bus stop for neighborhood children

13920  
Darnestown  
Rd.

School Bus  
Stop



Large  
Vertical  
Split  
(~6' long)

Photo 5. Facing south towards T1 and residence at 13920 Darnestown Road.



Large  
Vertical  
Crack  
(~6' long)

Photo 6. Facing north towards large crack at base of T1 where main stem is splitting.



Photo 7. Facing north side of T1 towards cavity, large split, and lightning protection.



Photo 8. South side of T1 canopy above Darnestown Rd.





Photo 9. Sounding T1 to determine extent of decay.

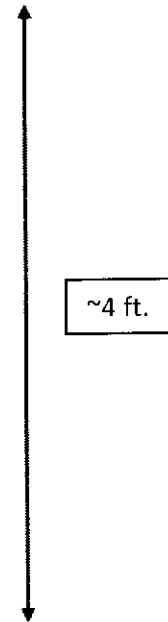


Photo 10. Full length of rebar “probe” used to determine depth of cavities.



Photo 11. Determining depth of cavity on north side of T1.



Photo 12. Determining depth of cavity on south side of T1.

T2



Photo 13. Facing east towards 79" northern catalpa (T2).



Crack  
Associated  
with Large  
Internal  
Cavity

Root  
Flare  
Decay

Photo 14. Facing west towards crack and main stem decay at base of T2.



Photo 15. Close up of crack, main stem decay, and lightning protection at base of T2.



Missing  
Bark/  
Decay

Photo 16. Facing east towards cavities, included and missing bark on T2.



Missing  
Bark/  
Decay on  
Leader

Root  
Flare  
Decay

Photo 17. Facing east towards missing bark/decay on the leader and root flare decay on T2.



Declining  
Crown

Photo 18. Facing northwest towards crown decline on T2.



Photo 19. Dieback in the canopy on the east side of T2.



Photo 20. Probing crack at base of T2 to determine depth of cavity inside.



Photo 22. Probing cavity on west side of T2 to determine depth of the cavity.



Photo 23. Probing cavity at the base on the west side of T2.

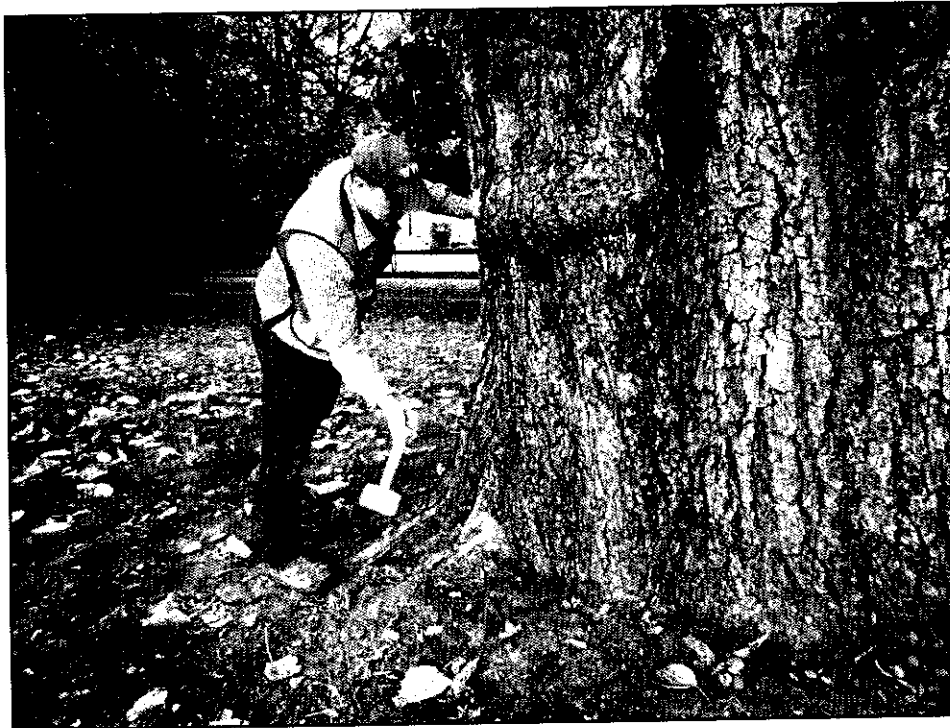
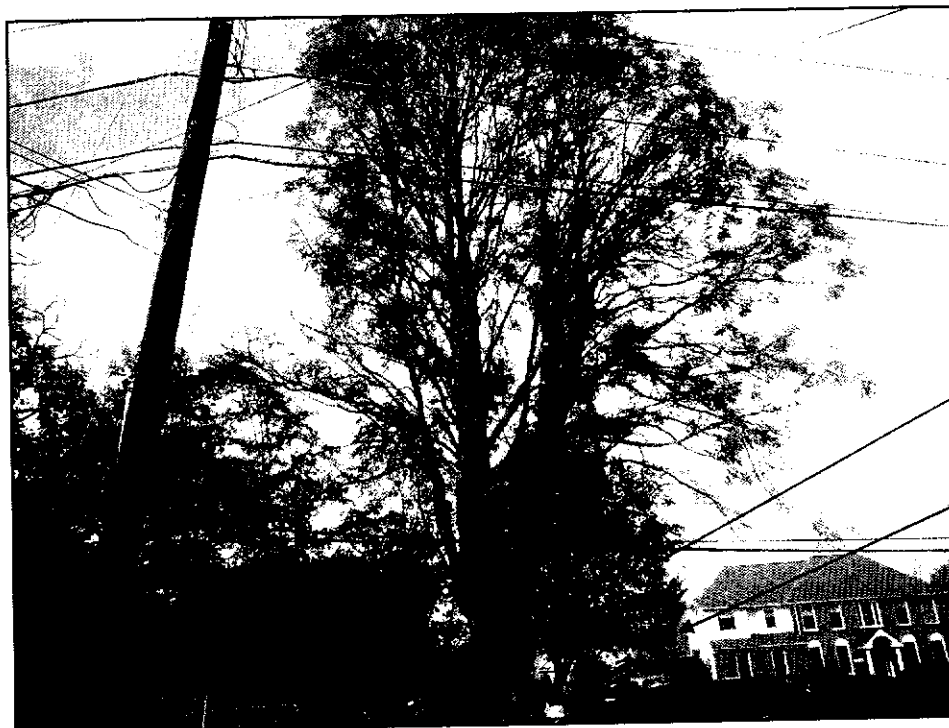


Photo 24. Sounding base of T2 to determine decay/hollow locations.



Crack in  
T1

School  
Bus Stop

Photo 25. Facing north towards crack in T1 and school bus stop from the residence at 13920 Darnestown Rd.



# ISA Basic Tree Risk Assessment Form

Client SJA Date 10/14/15 Time 10:45 AM  
 Address/Tree location 14001 Darnestown Rd (MD 28) Tree no. 1 Sheet 1 of 2  
 Tree species Kentucky Coffee tree dbh 59" Height ~95' Crown spread dia. ~96'  
 Assessor(s) GPA Time frame 1 year Tools used mallet, rebar probe, d-type

## Target Assessment Tangent height guide

Target number	Target description	Target zone			Occupancy rate 1 - rare 2 - occasional 3 - frequent 4 - constant	Practical to move target?	Restriction practical?
		Target within drip line	Target within 1 x Ht.	Target within 1.5 x Ht.			
1	Vehicles on MD 28	✓			3	N	N
2	Powerlines on south side of MD 28		✓		4	N	N
3	Homeowners in yards or driveway (Prestop) 14001 + 13909		✓		3	N	N
4	Residence @ 13920 Darnestown Rd		✓		4	N	N
5	Residence @ 13909 Darnestown Rd				4	N	N

History of failures minor broken branches Topography Flat  Slope  0-1 % Aspect W

Site changes None  Grade change  Site clearing  Changed soil hydrology  Root cuts  Describe \_\_\_\_\_

Soil conditions Limited volume  Saturated  Shallow  Compacted  Pavement over roots  30 % Describe MD 28 + driveway

Prevailing wind direction W Common weather Strong winds  Ice  Snow  Heavy rain  Describe Strong storms more frequent

**Tree Health and Species Profile**  
 Vigor Low  Normal  High  Foliage None (seasonal)  None (dead)  Normal 70 % Chlorotic  % Necrotic  %  
 Pests \_\_\_\_\_ Abiotic Starting full leaf drop + declining crown

Species failure profile Branches  Trunk  Roots  Describe Species not prone to failure typically

**Load Factors**  
 Wind exposure Protected  Partial  Full  Wind funneling  Trees to west + north  Relative crown size Small  Medium  Large   
 Crown density Sparse  Normal  Dense  Interior branches Few  Normal  Dense  Vines/Mistletoe/Moss  poison ivy

Recent or planned change in load factors Crown is showing decline

### Tree Defects and Conditions Affecting the Likelihood of Failure

#### — Crown and Branches —

Unbalanced crown  LCR 70-80 %  
 Dead twigs/branches  20 % overall Max. dia. 6-8"  
 Broken/Hangers Number N/A Max. dia. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Over-extended branches   
 Pruning history  
 Crown cleaned  Thinned  Raised   
 Reduced  Topped  Lion-tailed   
 Flush cuts  Other Roadway clearance  
 Main concern(s) Numerous Co-dominant leads with included bark and decay/cavity @ attachment with trunk. Large decay area in lead over MD 28  
 Load on defect N/A  Minor  Moderate  Significant  significant crown weight  
 Likelihood of failure Improbable  Possible  Probable  Imminent

#### — Trunk —

Dead/Missing bark  Abnormal bark texture/color   
 Codominant stems  Included bark  Cracks   
 Sapwood damage/decay  Cankers/Galls/Burls  Sap ooze   
 Lightning damage  Heartwood decay  Conks/Mushrooms   
 Cavity/Nest hole 15 % circ. Depth 3' Poor taper   
 Lean \_\_\_\_\_ ° Corrected? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Response growth minor response growth  
 Main concern(s) Signif decay w/ large trunk crack that is separating  
 Load on defect N/A  Minor  Moderate  Significant   
 Likelihood of failure Improbable  Possible  Probable  Imminent

#### — Roots and Root Collar —

Collar buried/Not visible  Depth \_\_\_\_\_ Stem girdling   
 Dead  Decay  Conks/Mushrooms   
 Ooze  Cavity  \_\_\_\_\_ % circ.  
 Cracks  Cut/Damaged roots  Distance from trunk \_\_\_\_\_  
 Root plate lifting  Soil weakness   
 Response growth Normal root collar visible  
 Main concern(s) Decay may be present @ base of trunk near root collar interface  
 Load on defect N/A  Minor  Moderate  Significant   
 Likelihood of failure Improbable  Possible  Probable  Imminent

Heartwood is significantly decayed/hollow. Approx 2/3 of trunk



# ISA Basic Tree Risk Assessment Form

Client SHA Date 10/14/15 Time 1:30 PM  
 Address/Tree location 14001 Darnestown Rd (MD 28) Tree no. 2 Sheet 1 of 2  
 Tree species Northern Catalpa dbh 19 Height 260 Crown spread dia. 284'  
 Assessor(s) GRD Time frame 1 year Tools used mallet, rebar probe, d-tape

## Target Assessment

target height guide

Target number	Target description	Target zone			Occupancy rate 1 - rare 2 - occasional 3 - frequent 4 - constant	Practical to move target?	Restriction practical?
		Target within drip line	Target within 1 x Ht.	Target within 1.5 x Ht.			
1	Vehicles on MD 28	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			3	N	N
2	Homeowners in yard @ 14001 Darnestown Rd		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		3	N	N
3	Powerlines on south side of MD 28		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		4	N	N
4	People in park			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	N	N

## Site Factors

History of failures branch failures Topography Flat  Slope  0-1 % Aspect W  
 Site changes None  Grade change  Site clearing  Changed soil hydrology  Root cuts  Describe \_\_\_\_\_  
 Soil conditions Limited volume  Saturated  Shallow  Compacted  Pavement over roots  15% Describe MD 28 to the South  
 Prevailing wind direction W Common weather Strong winds  Ice  Snow  Heavy rain  Describe Strong storms have more frequency in recent years  
 Tree Health and Species Profile Vigor Low  Normal  High  Foliage None (seasonal)  None (dead)  Normal 50 % Chlorotic  % Necrotic 10 %  
 Pests minor leaf damage (chewing + holes) Abiotic  Describe Fall leaf drop under way  
 Species failure profile Branches  Trunk  Roots  Describe Trunk failure due to internal decay

## Load Factors

Wind exposure Protected  Partial  Full  Wind funneling  Smaller trees adjacent Relative crown size Small  Medium  Large   
 Crown density Sparse  Normal  Dense  Interior branches Few  Normal  Dense  Vines/Mistletoe/Moss  minor poison ivy  
 Recent or planned change in load factors die back in canopy

## Tree Defects and Conditions Affecting the Likelihood of Failure

### — Crown and Branches —

existing lightning protection

Unbalanced crown  LCR 50 %  
 Dead twigs/branches  40 % overall Max. dia. 8-10"  
 Broken/Hangers Number 3 Max. dia. 8"  
 Over-extended branches   
 Pruning history Crown cleaned  Thinned  Raised   
 Reduced  Topped  Lion-tailed   
 Flush cuts  Other roadway clearance  
 Dead/Missing bark  Cankers/Galls/Burls  Sapwood damage/decay   
 Conks  Heartwood decay   
 Response growth low response growth observed  
 Main concern(s) Major crown decline with decay cracks and branch mortality evident in the canopy. Four cables already installed in canopy with questionable stability w/decay present  
 Load on defect N/A  Minor  Moderate  Significant   
 Likelihood of failure Improbable  Possible  Probable  Imminent  One lead is probable

### — Trunk —

Dead/Missing bark  Abnormal bark texture/color   
 Codominant stems  Included bark  Cracks   
 Sapwood damage/decay  Cankers/Galls/Burls  Sap ooze   
 Lightning damage  Heartwood decay  Conks/Mushrooms   
 Cavity/Nest hole 5 % circ. Depth 23' Poor taper   
 Lean  Corrected?   
 Response growth very minor visible on decay areas  
 Main concern(s) Trunk is hollow w/ major internal decay. Root collar interface is decayed  
 Load on defect N/A  Minor  Moderate  Significant   
 Likelihood of failure Improbable  Possible  Probable  Imminent

### — Roots and Root Collar —

Collar buried/Not visible  Depth \_\_\_\_\_ Stem girdling   
 Dead  Decay  Conks/Mushrooms   
 Ooze  Cavity  5 % circ.  
 Cracks  Cut/Damaged roots  Distance from trunk 2-5'  
 Root plate lifting  Soil weakness   
 Response growth Very minor is evident  
 Main concern(s) Root decay @ base of hollow trunk  
 Load on defect N/A  Minor  Moderate  Significant   
 Likelihood of failure Improbable  Possible  Probable  Imminent

(3/4) Significant heartwood + butt rot evident. Trunk hollow with more than 2/3 of trunk diameter is decayed Page 1 of 2

Risk Categorization

Condition number	Tree part	Conditions of concern	Part size	Fall distance	Target number	Target protection	Likelihood								Consequences				Risk rating of part (from Matrix 2)				
							Failure				Impact				Failure & Impact (from Matrix 1)								
							Improbable	Possible	Probable	Imminent	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Unlikely	Somewhat	Likely	Very likely		Negligible	Minor	Significant	Severe
1	Whole Tree	Trunk + Root Decay, Hollow	79" 30'	1	None			✓					✓					✓	HIGH				
			79" 50'	2	Trees			✓			✓								✓	Low			
			79" 50'	3	None			✓											✓	HIGH			
2	Front Half of Tree	Hollow @ Base	40" 30'	1	None			✓					✓					✓	HIGH				
			40" 50'	3	None			✓										✓	HIGH				
3	Back Half of Tree	Hollow @ Base + Major Decline	40" 50'	2	Trees	✓				✓			✓					✓	Low				
			40" 50'	4	Trees	✓		✓										✓	Low				
4	Lead over MD 28	Signif Lean + Internal Decay @ Attachment	24" 25'	1	None	✓							✓	✓				✓	MOD				
			24" 40'	3	None	✓												✓	MOD				

Matrix 1. Likelihood matrix.

Likelihood of Failure	Likelihood of Impacting Target			
	Very low	Low	Medium	High
Imminent	Unlikely	Somewhat likely	Likely	Very likely
Probable	Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat likely	Likely
Possible	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat likely
Improbable	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely

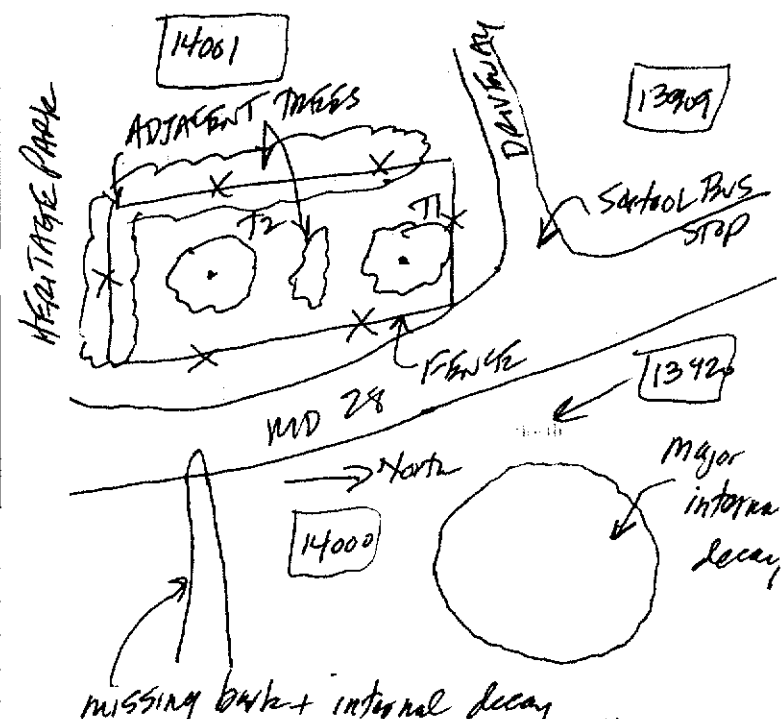
Matrix 2. Risk rating matrix.

Likelihood of Failure & Impact	Consequences of Failure			
	Negligible	Minor	Significant	Severe
Very likely	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
Likely	Low	Moderate	High	High
Somewhat likely	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Unlikely	Low	Low	Low	Low

Notes, explanations, descriptions SIGNIFICANT DECAY IN TRUNK AND ROOT FLARE JUNCTION. FOUR CABLES HAVE BEEN INSTALLED BUT STABILITY IS QUESTIONABLE WITH DECAY IN CROWN + SIGNIFICANT CANYON DIEBACK

Mitigation options MITIGATION IS NOT RECOMMENDED DUE TO SIGNIF Residual risk HIGH  
INTERNAL STEM DECAY AND POST COLLAR DECAY WITH CROWN Residual risk \_\_\_\_\_  
DECAY. CATALPA IS SUSCEPTIBLE TO TRUNK FAILURE Residual risk \_\_\_\_\_  
AND THIS HIGH RISK TREE IS RECOMMENDED FOR REMOVAL Residual risk \_\_\_\_\_

Overall tree risk rating Low  Moderate  High  Extreme   
 Overall residual risk Low  Moderate  High  Extreme   
 Data  Final  Preliminary Advanced assessment needed  No  Yes-Type/Reason \_\_\_\_\_  
 Inspection limitations  None  Visibility  Access  Vines  Root collar buried Describe \_\_\_\_\_





LICENSE \* REGISTRATION \* CERTIFICATION \* PERMIT  
STATE OF MARYLAND  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, LICENSING AND REGULATION

Martin O'Malley  
Governor  
Anthony G. Brown  
Lt. Governor  
Leonard J. Howie, III  
Secretary

STATE BOARD OF FORESTERS

CERTIFIES THAT:

GREGORY RICHARD O'HARE

IS AN AUTHORIZED 01 - FORESTER

LIC/REG/CERT  
658

EXPIRATION  
11-15-2015

EFFECTIVE  
N/A

CONTROL NO  
4462511

Leonard J. Howie, III  
Secretary, DLLR

Signature of Bearer

WHERE REQUIRED BY LAW THIS MUST BE CONSPICUOUSLY DISPLAYED IN OFFICE TO WHICH IT APPLIES



STATE OF MARYLAND  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
FOREST SERVICE



**Certificate of Registration  
as a  
Licensed Tree Expert**

This is to certify that

Mr. Gregory O. Fure

ROMMEL, KLEPPER AND KAHL, LLP

81 Mosher Street

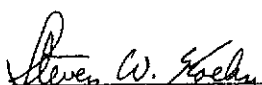
Baltimore, MD 21217

having met the requirements in the Maryland Code is hereby licensed and qualified to practice as a tree expert and to engage in the business of the treatment and care of trees in the state of Maryland.

License 000511

Issued this Tenth day of January 2014

This license expires December 31, 2015 and is renewable yearly thereafter upon payment of the proper fee, or revoked by the Department for non-compliance with the terms of the Tree Expert Law.

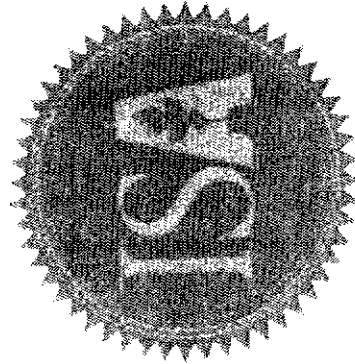
  
Director / State Forester

This certificate must be displayed in a conspicuous place.

# INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF ARBORICULTURE CERTIFIED ARBORIST™

## Gregory R O'Hare

Having successfully completed the requirements set by the Arborist Certification Board of the International Society of Arboriculture, the above named is hereby recognized as an ISA Certified Arborist®

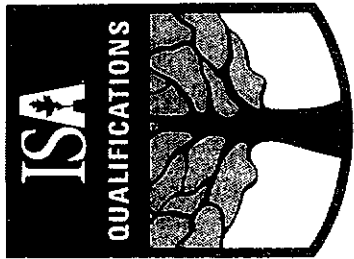


Jim Skiera, Executive Director  
International Society of Arboriculture

*Skip Kusan*

Certification Board, Chair  
International Society of Arboriculture,

MA-3158A	Jan 20, 2000	Jun 30, 2018
Certification Number	Certified Since	Expiration Date



# International Society of Arboriculture™ Tree Risk Assessment Qualification

Gregory R. O'Hare

Having successfully completed the requirements established by the Certification Board of the International Society of Arboriculture™, the above named is hereby recognized as ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualified.

*Gregory R. O'Hare*

*Skip Kincaid*

Skip Kincaid, Certification Board Chair  
International Society of Arboriculture

*Jim Skiera*

Jim Skiera, Executive Director  
International Society of Arboriculture

August 21, 2013

August 21, 2018

Issue Date

Term of Validity End Date