DEC Charges Four in Unrelated Timber Theft Cases in Delaware and Greene Counties

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has charged four individuals in unrelated timber theft cases in Delaware and Greene counties over the past few months, DEC Regional Director Keith Goertz announced today.

"Timber thefts often occur in remote areas with unscrupulous loggers taking advantage of unsuspecting people," Goertz said. "DEC is uniquely qualified to investigate and enforce timber theft cases and will vigorously prosecute anyone taking advantage of New York property owners and degrading New York's natural resources."

DEC's Environmental Conservation Officers (ECOs) regularly investigate instances of timber theft. To report a suspected timber theft, New York residents should contact their local Environmental Conservation Officer or call 1-844-DEC-ECOS (1-844-332-3267).

**Greene County, Town of Cairo**On July 28, a DEC Environmental Conservation Officer (ECO) and a Greene County Sheriff's Deputy responded to a complaint of timber theft in the town of Cairo. The property owner, who lives out of state, made the complaint after learning his property was being logged. Investigators discovered the property owner's tenant had planned to log the entire 100-acre property. Luckily, after only removing one truckload of 19 logs with a value of $1,353, the logger was stopped and the logs were tracked to a local timber yard. Samples of the logs were taken and a DEC Forester determined that the stolen logs matched the stumps from the property in question. The ECO and Sheriff's Deputy arrested a 32-year-old male from Cairo and charged him with felony grand larceny, punishable by a $5,000 fine or double the monetary gain from the stolen timber, and/or up to four years in jail. In addition, the subject was charged with misdemeanor timber theft (punishable by a fine of $250/per tree, treble damages, or both, and/or up to one year in jail), misdemeanor criminal mischief (punishable by a fine of up to $1,000 and/or up to one year in jail), and the violation of trespassing (punishable by a fine of up to $250 and/or up 15 days in jail). The subject was immediately arraigned in the Cairo Town Court, where he pleaded not guilty and was sent to jail on $5,000 bail/$15,000 bond.

**Delaware County, Town of Walton**
On April 15, an ECO and DEC Forester met with a property owner who claimed that a logger on an adjacent property had crossed over onto his land and cut down trees and bulldozed and damaged the land. A DEC Forester examined the property and determined that 22 trees were cut from the property (an estimated value of $888) and that an 8-foot-wide by 205-foot-long skid road was cut, damaging the subject's property. On June 15, the ECO located the 68-year-old logger from Walton and charged him with misdemeanor timber theft, which is punishable by a fine of $250/per tree, treble damages, or both, and/or up to a year in jail. On August 3, the subject paid $2,800 in damages to the property owner to settle the case in Walton Town Court.

**Delaware County, Town of Colchester**
In May and June of 2016, DEC received three unique complaints against a logger for timber theft, spilling oil in a stream, and leaving heavy equipment on private property without landowner permission. After an investigation by ECOs and a DEC Forester, a 41-year-old male from the town of Colchester was arrested on June 30 and charged with felony grand larceny, punishable by a $5,000 fine or double the monetary gain from the stolen timber, and/or up to seven years in jail. In addition, the subject was charged with misdemeanor timber theft (punishable by a fine of $250 per tree, treble damages, or both, and/or up to a year in jail), misdemeanor illegal solid waste disposal (punishable by up to $15,000 fine and/or up to 90 days in jail), and misdemeanor crossing a stream without a permit (punishable by up to $10,000 and/or up to one year in jail). DEC's investigation revealed that 48 trees were illegally removed worth an estimated $4,786, and that heavy equipment had leaked hydraulic oil and was being illegally stored on private property. The case was moved to the Walton Town Court and a court date set for Sept. 28.

**Delaware County, Town of Bovina**
In April of 2016, DEC received two complaints against a 34-year-old male logger from the village of Fleischmanns who had allegedly removed trees from two adjoining properties in Bovina without landowner permission. ECOs and Forestry staff investigated and found that 165 trees, estimated to be worth $10,685, were removed from the two properties without landowner consent. On July 12, the logger was arraigned in Bovina Town Court on felony grand larceny, which is punishable by a $5,000 fine or double the monetary gain from the stolen timber, and/or up to seven years in jail. He was also charged with misdemeanor timber theft, which is punishable by a fine of $250 per tree, treble damages, or both, and/or up to one year in jail. The logger pleaded not guilty to both charges and is due back in court on Sept. 27.