



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

Local Officials Issue Public Appeal for Help in Relocating Turkeys

ANDREW J LANZA April 10, 2014

Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis, State Senator Andrew Lanza, Borough President James Oddo, and Councilman Steven Matteo are looking for suitable new homes for the population of wild turkeys now inhabiting Ocean Breeze and its adjacent neighborhoods.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) recently issued permits for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to perform a capture-removal operation, resulting in relocation of a portion of the birds to the Catskill Animal Sanctuary in Saugerties, New York. Due to the limited space at the sanctuary, however, a number of the turkeys had to be slaughtered for food processing.

After a recent meeting with DEC officials, the lawmakers sent a letter to Regional Director Venetia Lannon expressing their disfavor toward any further killing of the turkeys, and requesting a stay on the next USDA capture-removal operation to provide an opportunity to find a suitable facility to accept the birds. A copy of the letter is attached.

DEC has acquiesced and will postpone the USDA activity while they continue their own efforts to find a location.

Inquiries into other animal sanctuaries throughout the state have been unsuccessful. The lawmakers are now seeking owners of suitable private property who are willing to accept

some of the birds.

Typical features of a suitable facility include the following:

- An area of 75 feet by 75 feet for 12 turkeys, an area of 150 feet by 150 for 24 turkeys, and so on.
- 1 2-foot fences made of 16-gauge wire mesh, or shorter fences covered by netting to prevent the turkeys from flying out
- Elevated roosts for sleeping (can be constructed of four-inched diameter poles, three feet above ground level and not near fencing)
- Places to preen feathers
- Access to range (short grass area)
- Protection from predators
- Access to food and water

Interested parties are encouraged to contact Assemblywoman Malliotakis's office at 718-987-0197 or email marronep@assembly.state.ny.us.

"After several years of wrestling with this issue, it has become evident that the turkeys must be relocated from Ocean Breeze. Having so many turkeys roaming residential neighborhoods yields a generally unsafe situation for motorists and unsanitary conditions for homeowners," said Assemblywoman Malliotakis. "In the past, residents have come forward with propositions to take some of the birds into their care, but lacked the facilities to house them and were denied by DEC. We've recently asked DEC to establish ground rules for what's required and we're putting forth a good-faith effort to have these birds removed from the streets and front lawns, and relocated to a place where they'll be much happier and properly cared for."

“While I understand that the wild turkeys in the Ocean Breeze area have presented an ongoing dilemma to Staten Island residents, we’d like to see an outcome that allows for their relocation as opposed to their slaughter. Please spread the word about DEC’s criteria for the type of place that is suitable for relocation so that the opportunity to save the turkeys might present itself,” said Senator Lanza.

“If you have an appropriate piece of property and you want to help save turkeys, we want to hear from you. The reality is that the situation in Ocean Breeze is untenable, and government has to act to help those whose quality-of-life has been negatively affected by the turkeys. But, no one wants the turkeys killed. We would prefer to find them an appropriate home where they can live out their days in their natural environment,” said Borough President Oddo.

“The turkeys in Ocean Breeze are a longstanding nuisance, and they have to be removed from the borough. That being said, we want to work with DEC to make sure that they can be relocated. That is why we are asking the public’s assistance to find suitable locations,” said Councilman Matteo.

It is suspected that years of hand-feeding have diminished the turkeys’ innate fear of humans, and increased their boldness in entering residential areas. In response to a letter sent by Assemblywoman Malliotakis, the South Beach Psychiatric Center recently placed “No Feeding” signs on their property along Seaview Avenue. Malliotakis, Lanza, Oddo, and Matteo hope that a lack of food from hand-feeding will drive the turkeys back to natural feeding open space and parkland where they belong.

Attached: Letter from Councilman Matteo, Assemblywoman Malliotakis, Borough President Oddo, and Senator Andrew Lanza to DEC Regional Director Venetia Lannon, expressing opposition to killing the turkeys and requesting time to find relocation sites.

###