



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
February 7, 2019

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## **Environmental groups urge city to reconsider invasive tree planted as 9/11 tribute**

(Fort Wayne, IN) A group of environmental and nonprofit organizations has contacted City of Fort Wayne officials regarding an invasive tree species that was recently planted on city property as a tribute to victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. The callery pear tree that was planted is a descendant of a tree rescued from the wreckage of Sept. 11.

The callery pear tree is a non-native, invasive species with potential to harm Fort Wayne's ecosystem. Every year millions of taxpayer dollars, foundation grants and private donations are used to eradicate invasive species like the callery pear tree. In May of last year the Indiana Department of Natural Resources sent a press release throughout the state urging communities to avoid planting callery pear trees.

"As our city leaders, we count on you to make responsible decisions that will maintain and improve the ecological diversity of the city's public spaces," said Celia Garza, chair of the Northeast Indiana Sierra Club Network Group, one of the groups sending the letter.

"While planting a tree in remembrance of victims is a beautiful gesture and certainly appreciated, it is important that we honor the history of 9/11 in a way that does not unintentionally harm the natural environment," said Garza.

The letter offered the city two options that may enable the tree to remain without causing negative effects: keep the tree indoors where its seeds cannot spread or spray the tree yearly with an inhibiting agent to prevent it from seeding. The latter being an option the group would prefer not to see happen.

Besides Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter, other groups signing the letter were Hoosier Environmental Council, Save Maumee, Citizens Action Coalition, Plant Happiness, Indiana Forest Alliance and Three Rivers Art Center for Kids (TRACK).