

June 23, 2018



Senate 23's environment is essential and should be protected

In this essay, Candidate for RI Senate 23 writes about the connection between the district and the environment. Roselli is running for Senate 23 to give voice to all those who live in northwestern RI. A naturalist, a Master of Science degree student at Bryant University in Global Environmental Studies, a land preservationist for over 20 years, Roselli remembers when he first arrived in this area.

“Got home late, last night..around 10:15pm or so. The air was sweet from the milkweeds and other flowers some blooming earlier than past years. I stood in my backyard and watched the fire flies. A hundred or so from near the tree line in back to along the edge of a newly finished driveway. The site of this number of fire flies is new as I haven't seen this many or this early for a very long time. Seems that the fire flies are finally returning.

When I first arrived in Burrillville in 1983 my wife and I would travel to Sweets Hill. There, hundreds of thousands of fire flies roamed the wetlands from the road to the tree line. Fifty acres or so of fire flies. When my wife's brother would come to visit from Cleveland we would take him near the grassy hill just off East Avenue so he could see the spectacle. Watching the thousands of fire flies each time we visited was beautiful and overwhelming. Small but discernible individual flickers of light as each fire fly made its way to find like minded individuals or an attractive suitable mate. Sometime around 1989 or so the gypsy moth caterpillar wrecked havoc on the woods of this region and most of the northeast US. The material Sevin - a Carbaryl - was used as a spray and dust to kill the caterpillar.

Sevin is a cholinesterase inhibitor and is toxic to humans. It is classified as a likely human carcinogen by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The chemical kills gypsy moth caterpillars as well as another 100 different species, including fire flies. Sevin persists in the environment. During the first 72 hours, the chemical's half life, about 50%, of the toxicity is still around. The stuff stays in the ground, on the leaf surface and in ground water for about 100 days killing off more individuals before it is completely gone.

The year after they sprayed, nearly all of the fire flies were killed along with the gypsy moth caterpillars. We traveled to that spot after the spraying. The woods and the wetlands were dark.

Since 1990 the fire flies have never made a comeback to what they were in 1983. Go to Sweet's Hill today along East Avenue in Harrisville around 10pm and watch. You may see a few.

But this year, last night to be precise, they are coming back. Slowly, methodically, as toxic lawn chemicals are slowly being phased out. As inorganic insecticides are being replaced with alternatives, as we learn more about our impact to the world around us they, the fire flies are slowly returning.

I stood there, last night, and watched in amazement, comforted by their persistence.”

Paul is a Candidate for Senate District 23 that includes Burrillville, Glocester and North Smithfield. Since 1983, Paul has made his home in the region. Paul has travelled all over Rhode Island in opposition to the fracked gas power plant proposed for the middle of the woods in northwestern Rhode Island.

You can find out more by going to www.paulroselli.com.

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