

14 Saturday-Sunday,
January 11-12, 2020

JJ STATE / REGION

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IN BRIEF

RI air show returns in 2020

The annual Rhode Island National Guard Open House Air Show in Quonset Point will resume in 2020 after having been canceled last year because of troop deployments. This year's show is scheduled for June 27-28 at the Quonset Air National Guard Base in North Kingstown. The air show debuted in 1992 and has been canceled twice, once in 2013 because of federal budget cuts and last year. Officials said this year's show will include an F-22 Raptor demonstration, the U.S. Air Force Academy Jump Team, a World War II heritage flight, and Geico Skytypers. It also will feature the Rhode Island National Guard's C-130J cargo planes and UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters.

Plans for MLK plaque advance

Plans to install a plaque at the Massachusetts Statehouse to mark the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s address to lawmakers in the building in 1965 are moving forward. MassLive.com reported that the House on Dec. 23 passed a resolve filed early last year that would authorize the installation of a plaque in the House chamber. The address was delivered on April 22, 1965, to a joint session of the legislature during King's two-day visit to Boston that included a march by thousands from Roxbury to the Boston Common the following day. The march was to protest segregation in schools and in other areas of life.

Mansion tours top 1 million

The nonprofit that oversees several of Newport, Rhode Island's famous mansions hosted more than 1 million tours in 2019, the organization said. It was the fourth consecutive year that the Preservation Society of Newport County has hosted more than 1 million tours. Visitors came from all 50 states and more than 100 countries. The number of tours includes people who visited more than one of the society's 11 historic properties. The society also hosted its 40th millionth tour since its founding in 1945.

3rd right whale calf spotted

A third right whale calf has been spotted off the southeastern United States, giving conservationists hope for the jeopardized species this winter. North Atlantic right whales number only about 411, and have been plagued by high mortality and poor reproduction in recent years. Not a single baby right whale was born in the winter of 2017-18. Several of the calves were spotted last year, and this year there have been at least three. The whales are often seen close to the New England coast in the spring, when they head north to feed.

Compiled from staff and news service reports.

Mass. looks to Connecticut for advice on concrete issue

By Eric Bedner

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A Massachusetts special commission has recommended the adoption of several measures that have proven effective in Connecticut to address the crumbling concrete crisis, which is estimated to cost as much as \$350 million north of the border.

The commission's recommendations include establishing a captive insurance company to assist with foundation replacements, continuing existing testing programs, encouraging insurance companies to contribute to remediations and provide funding for repairs other than foundations, requiring disclosures when selling a home, and developing a standard tax abatement to be used by all impacted Massachusetts towns.

The commission also has recommended Massachusetts prohibit the use of material from Becker's Quarry in Willington, Connecticut, in any residential or commercial structures, as well as requiring core testing for the presence of pyrrhotite in all current and future quarries in Massachusetts.

Connecticut has yet to implement quarry testing standards.

While there are massive areas in Massachusetts that contain sulfide minerals, there are no active quarries in Massachusetts in areas where sulfides are found.

The only known quarry affected in Connecticut is Becker's Quarry, which has an ongoing agreement with the state to not provide aggregate for residential use.

The Massachusetts commission, which released its report Dec. 31, was charged with studying the financial and economic impacts of crumbling foundations and delivering its recommendations to the legislature.

Much of the report focused on a 44-mile radius, surrounding the now-defunct J.J. Mottes concrete company in Stafford that's been at the center of the issue in Connecticut. That area extends well into southern Massachusetts.



Jim Michaud / Journal Inquirer

Michelle Loglisci points out the crack developing in the cellar foundation of her home in Monson, Mass., in 2018.

"The impacts of the use of this concrete have been significant in the state of Connecticut, which the special commission focused much of its study on," the report states.

Commission members attempted to gain an understanding of how many homes in Massachusetts may have foundations with pyrrhotite, the mineral causing foundations to deteriorate.

Although Massachusetts already has a testing program, commission members said they feel the low number of affected homeowners taking advantage of it is due to a lack of awareness of the issue and fear of testing positive.

Contractors in the affected region were unwilling to offer information regarding how often they may have used J.J. Mottes concrete or the properties they would have worked on during the timeframe without assurances that they would not be

culpable.

"In evaluating the information, the special commission was additionally hindered by the lack of documentation from J.J. Mottes on the projects they supplied concrete to during this time," the report states. "This was due to a fire that destroyed a majority of their files."

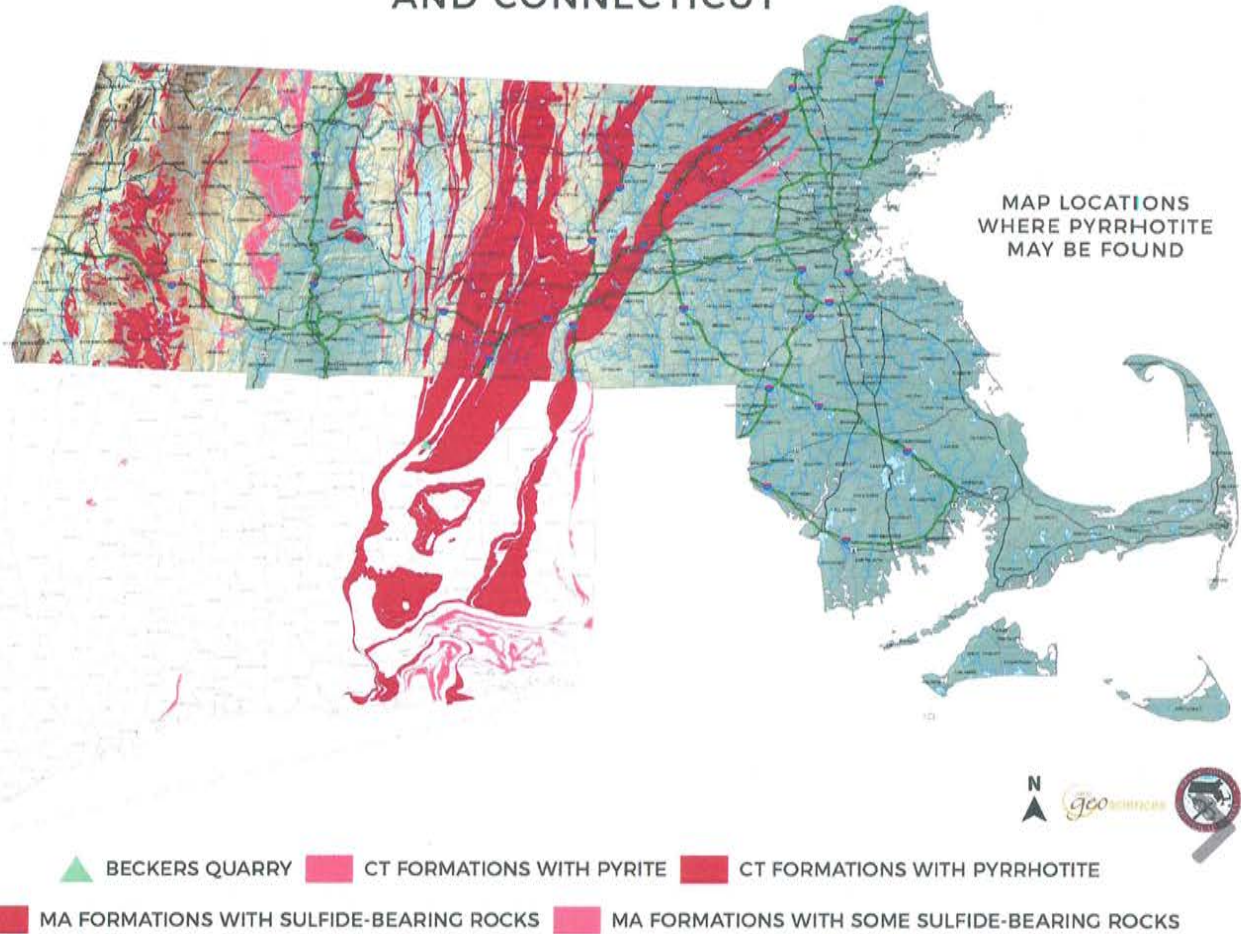
Within a 90-minute travel time from J.J. Mottes, there are a total of more than 95,000 residential structures built between 1983 and 2015, according to the commission.

Special commission member Craig Dauphinais, executive director of the Massachusetts Concrete and Aggregate Producers Association, estimated that between 1,500 and 2,000 homes were built in the Massachusetts with J.J. Mottes concrete during the timeframe.

All or part of 20 towns within 20

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SULFIDE-BEARING ROCKS OF MASSACHUSETTS AND CONNECTICUT



Source: Final Report of the Massachusetts Special Commission to Study the Financial and Economic Impacts of Crumbling Concrete Foundations due to the Presence of Pyrrhotite

Panel: Mass. buyers and sellers are becoming more aware of issue

CONCRETE

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miles of J.J. Mottes are deemed to be most at risk.

Springfield, with 4,050 homes built within the time-frame, had the most structures built.

Fourteen other towns within 30 miles of J.J. Mottes are deemed at "moderate" risk.

Based on the estimation that replacing a foundation can cost between \$150,000 and \$250,000, the commission determined the total potential

cost to fix all affected homes in Massachusetts is roughly \$350 million.

As in Connecticut, Massachusetts municipalities are expected to face financial impacts as homeowners have their properties reassessed.

Citing figures from the Coventry, Connecticut, assessor's office, the report notes that Connecticut towns have seen an estimated \$81 million decrease in tax revenue due to reassessments, with the average home assessment reduced about \$90,000.

It is not yet clear how much property tax revenue could be lost in Massachusetts through reassessments, but "there will be a significant impact on the real estate industry in the region, particularly as homeowners undergo the process of reassessment," the report states.

The commission determined that buyers and sellers are becoming more aware of the issue, and buyers are beginning to make decisions based on location and age of a home,

adjusting their search to possibly avoid areas where the problem is more widespread.

"The special commission discussed the need for several pieces of legislation to be passed immediately to ensure that homeowners faced with this issue do not pass it on to an unknowing buyer," the report states.

When determining best practices to address the crisis, the commission examined Connecticut's efforts, including investigating a trade practices

violation, preventing insurance companies from dropping affected homes from coverage, establishing a state-funded testing program, allowing reassessments, creating a captive insurance company, and implementing a \$12 surcharge on homeowner insurance policies to go toward repairs.

As in Connecticut, insurance companies in Massachusetts won't cover crumbling foundations because they are excluded from policies' definition of "collapse."