

Lansing man who cleared nearly 100 trees from his neighbor's property is awaiting sentencing

OFFICE OF LEAVENWORTH COUNTY ATTORNEY

TODD THOMPSON, COUNTY ATTORNEY

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countyattorney@leavenworthcounty.gov

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CASE NUMBER: LV-2024-CR-000229

LEAVENWORTH, Kan. --- A Lansing, Kansas, man is awaiting sentencing after admitting to illegally removing or damaging nearly 100 trees and placing a hunting stand on neighboring property that wasn't his.

During a plea hearing held on Wednesday, August 21, 2024, James Dean Cole, 67, pleaded guilty to one count of Criminal Damage to Property.

According to court documents, Cole entered onto private property near North 139th Street and Nottingham Drive between June 1, 2023, and September 30, 2023. During this time, Cole cut through a barbed wire fence, removed or felled approximately 95 trees, and set up a hunting blind on the land. The incident came to the attention of law enforcement on January 1, 2024, when the victim reported it to the Lansing Police Department.

During Wednesday's plea hearing, the prosecution disclosed that Cole's actions resulted in over \$14,000 in damages. A lumber and sawmill company that surveyed the property estimated the value of the trees he cut down at \$13,200, with an additional \$900 in damages to the fencing. According to the estimate, Cole felled 80 cherry tree saplings ranging from four to ten feet in height, eight hackberry trees between six and ten feet tall, and seven walnut trees of similar height. The cherry trees were valued at \$138 each, the hackberry trees at \$89 each, and the walnut trees at \$195 each.

Leavenworth County Attorney Todd Thompson said, "First things first. Never go on private property that doesn't belong to you unless it's an emergency. If you go on private property that doesn't belong to you, please don't cause damage."

A sentencing hearing is scheduled for October 2, 2024.