



Iowa communities work to prevent spread of emerald ash borer

By The Iowa Department of Natural Resources | Posted: Saturday, May 22, 2010 11:46 pm

The recent confirmation of four emerald ash borer (EAB) larvae at Henderson Island on the Mississippi River, near New Albin, will step up Iowa's efforts to prevent the spread of the invasive pest.

A quarantine prohibiting the movement of firewood, ash nursery stock, ash timber, or any other article that could further spread EAB is pending from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. A federal quarantine would follow the state quarantine.

The biggest impact will likely be felt by sawmills and firewood vendors who will now need to meet special quarantine requirements before shipping any of their products out of a quarantined area. Iowans can help slow the spread of EAB by not moving firewood. Purchase and burn the firewood locally.

Ash make up about 6 percent of Iowa's woodland trees. What does this mean to residents in northeast Iowa? Tivon Feeley, forest health program leader with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, said homeowners should look at their ash trees.

"If they have dead or dying ash trees, it may be time to take them out," said Feeley. "If there is a high value tree on the landscape, there are chemical treatment options, but the treatment is expensive and it is a lifetime commitment."

As for communities, a grant from the USDA Forest Service allowed the DNR to develop a kit to assist in the battle with this pest. The kit is available online at www.iowadnr.gov then click on State Forests/ Forestry, and then on the EAB Resource Kit under the Urban Forestry heading in the column on the left.

The EAB resource kit will allow communities to estimate the cost to remove the trees and has information on where those trees can be processed. The kit also includes basic identification information, has a list of consulting foresters, and tree treatment options. Iowa has an estimated 58 million rural ash trees and another 30 million urban ash trees.

The DNR has been working with communities that have a population under 5,000 in 12 eastern Iowa counties after receiving a grant from the Forest Service. The grant provides funding to conduct community street tree inventories and to create comprehensive management plans. The management plans will focus on the importance of street trees, overall forest health of street trees, management cycles, risk tree mitigation, and suggestions on how to manage the ash tree populations. Regional meetings are being planned to answer questions from the communities that received management plans.

The DNR, working along side IDALS, ISU Extension and USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Plant Protection and Quarantine, has received federal funding to monitor for the presence of EAB since 2005 using sentinel trees. Sentinel trees were created by removing a 6-inch strip of bark, called girdling, around standing ash trees that are 4 to 13 inches in diameter, or planting and girdling donated containerized, approximately 3 inches in diameter.

Since the primary movement of EAB is through firewood, the sentinel trees were established in high risk campgrounds and sawmills. To date, 1,177 sentinel trees have tested negative for EAB larvae. DNR has established an addition 412 sentinel trees for the 2010 monitoring season, 12 of these are in Allamakee County where EAB has been found.

Additional efforts to find adult emerald ash borer are in place, and the EAB team members will again use the purple sticky traps in northeast Iowa and along the Mississippi.

"We have been watching the insect get closer to Iowa and knew it was only a matter of time before it arrived," said Feeley. "Now that it's here, the wood industry in the immediate area will need to change the way it operates and campers will need to be vigilant in not moving firewood."