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Emerald Ash Borer Found in New York State

Surveys and Monitoring in Cattaraugus County Area to Help Delineate Spread of Invasive Beetle

ALBANY, NY (06/17/2009) -- New York State Agriculture Commissioner Patrick Hooker and Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis today announced the discovery of an Emerald Ash Borer infestation (EAB) in Randolph, Cattaraugus County. The EAB is a small but destructive beetle that infests and kills North American ash tree species, including green, white, black and blue ash. This is the first time it has been detected in New York.

New York has more than 900 million ash trees, representing about seven percent of all trees in the state, and all are at risk should this invasive, exotic pest become established. This is just the latest in a series of terrestrial and aquatic invasive species detections across New York State, including the Asian Longhorned Beetle, Sirex woodwasp, didymo, zebra mussels, and Eurasian water milfoil. This has prompted the state to strengthen regulations, increase educational outreach, and encourage ways of limiting the unintentional spread of these potentially devastating pests throughout the state.

Commissioner Hooker said, "While this is the first reported finding of the Emerald Ash Borer in New York State, it is not surprising. This beetle has been detected on either side of Lake Ontario for several years now and there is little that can be done to stop the natural spread of this devastating pest. That being said, we will work diligently to learn more about the infestation and try to limit the artificial spread of the beetle here in New York through regulations, surveys and public education."

Commissioner Grannis said, "This is yet another wake-up call for all New Yorkers that invasive species pose a grave threat to the health of our natural resources and ecosystems, and ultimately, our economy. Tough but practical measures, such as quarantines, firewood regulations, public education and other regulatory actions will continue to be needed if we are to limit the damage from EAB and other invasives."

In 2008, New York adopted regulations that ban untreated firewood from entering the state and restricts intrastate movement of untreated firewood to no more than a 50-mile radius from its source (<http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/28722.html>). This was done as a precaution against the introduction and spread of EAB and other invasive species because of the documented risk of transmission by moving firewood.

Commissioner Carol Ash of the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation said, "If not contained, this pest may cause significant ecological and economic harm. Working with our partners, OPRHP will do all we can to protect Southern Tier forests, and in particular, Allegany State Park. We strongly encourage park patrons to join us. Please do not bring firewood to our state parks. Buy it locally and burn all that you buy"

The infestation was initially reported to the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets on June 15, 2009, by Rick Hoebeke, an entomologist at Cornell University, after two U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Research Service employees recognized damage to some local ash trees just off Exit 16 of State Route 17/I-86. After receiving the report and conducting an initial inspection, an adult beetle from the infested area was submitted with the identification confirmed by the USDA's Systematic Entomology Laboratory at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. Photographs depicting the infestation will be posted to <ftp://ftp.dec.state.ny.us/dpae/press/>. Approximately 30 trees are infested or highly suspected of being infested to date.

Jonathan Staples of the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service said, "The detection of the Emerald Ash Borer could have a profound effect on the state's landscape given the huge number of ash trees located throughout New York. Exotic invasive species such as this need to be closely monitored not only for its potential to spread naturally, but also, the potential for artificial spread through firewood movement and other regulated articles."

THE EMERALD ASH BORER:

The EAB has metallic green wing covers and a coppery red or purple abdomen; it is small enough to fit easily on a penny (photos: <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/CAPS/pdf/Emerald%20Ash%20Borer%20Poster.pdf> and <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7253.html>). Damage is caused by the larvae, which feed in tunnels called galleries in the phloem just below the bark. The serpentine galleries disrupt water and nutrient transport, causing branches, and eventually the entire tree, to die. Adult beetles leave distinctive D-shaped exit holes in the outer bark of the branches and the trunk. Other signs of infection include tree canopy dieback, yellowing, extensive sprouting from the roots and trunk (called "epicormic shoots") and browning of leaves. Infested trees may also exhibit woodpecker damage from larvae extraction.

Since its discovery in southeastern Michigan in 2002, the EAB is responsible for the destruction of over 70 million ash trees in the U.S. The beetle has been moving steadily outward from its first discovered infestation in Detroit, Michigan, and has now been found in 13 states and two neighboring Canadian provinces. The primary way this insect spreads is when firewood and wood products are moved from one place to another. Many of New York State's forests and parklands, including Allegany State Park which is near the recent EAB finding, are high-risk areas due to firewood movement.

New York State has been actively surveying for EAB since 2003, inspecting declining ash trees and setting traps in Western and Eastern New York, Long Island and New York City. Up until this discovery, no signs of EAB were ever detected in the state.

WHAT IS BEING DONE NOW:

A cooperative effort among USDA and New York State staff will conduct a thorough survey of trees and deploy a more intensive trapping effort in the surrounding area to assess the extent and age of the infestation. Information from this survey will help determine the response strategy, which could range from tree removals associated with eradication and safety concerns, to ash product quarantines. DEC's firewood regulations prohibiting out-of-state transport of untreated firewood and intra-state movement of untreated firewood more than 50 miles remain in effect and are an extremely important tool to contain this damaging pest.

WHAT OTHERS CAN DO:

New Yorkers are urged to take the following steps to keep EAB from spreading to other areas of the State:

- * It is best to leave all firewood at home - please do not bring it to campgrounds or parks.
- * Get your firewood at the campground or from a local vendor - ask for a receipt or label that has the firewood's local source.
- * If you choose to transport firewood within New York State: It must have a receipt or label that has the firewood's source and it must remain within 50 miles of that source; For firewood not purchased (i.e. cut from your own property) you must have a Self-Issued Certificate of Source, and it must be sourced within 50 miles of your destination; Only firewood labeled as meeting New York's heat treatment standards to kill pests (kiln-dried) may be transported into the state and further than 50 miles from the firewood's source.
- * Watch for signs of infestation in your ash trees. If you suspect your ash tree could be infested by EAB, go to the websites below for more information. If damage is consistent with the known symptoms of EAB infestation, report suspected damage to the state by calling 1-866-640-0652 for appropriate action as time and resources allow.

Troy Weldy, Director of Ecological Management for The Nature Conservancy, said: "The Emerald Ash Borer will have significant economic and environmental impacts, the likes of which western New York hasn't seen since the Chestnut Blight or Dutch Elm Disease. This discovery emphasizes the need to establish a national early detection network around major ports of entry so we can intercept these pests before they become established. It is also important for citizens to understand that these pests are easily transported in firewood. We ask everyone to do their part by only burning wood close to where they buy it."

For more information, visit the following web pages:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/emerald_ash_b/index.shtml

<http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/CAPS/pdf/Emerald%20Ash%20Borer%20Poster.pdf>

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7253.html>