

## **Important Letter to Windings Residents**

# **IDA Sounds Death Knell for Area Ash Trees**

Last evening, Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDA) staff met with the Windings Homeowners' Association Board of Directors and some 25 Windings residents who have the option to have the state pay for the removal of their infested ash trees within the next six weeks. The surprise of the meeting: in response to a direct question regarding the future of ash trees over the next twenty years, IDA's Mark Cinnamon stated that, barring some scientific breakthrough, the ash tree will become a rare tree species in Northern Illinois. It is estimated that Illinois now has 130 million live ash trees and that as many as 10% of the Winding's trees are ash.

Last Thursday, IDA issued its long awaited protocol for dealing with the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) which was first discovered in Illinois in June, 2006 here in the Windings. IDA believes that the EAB has been in Winding's trees for over five years. Based on recent months of tree bark stripping surveys in Kane and Cook Counties, IDA now concludes that the EAB threat is not contained in relatively few areas: they have found infested trees throughout Kane County. The estimated travel capability of this insect has been revised from a half mile/year to possibly 12 wind assisted miles/year. IDA has decided to expend state funds to offer voluntary removal of known infested ash trees within a half mile of original identified trees on the northwest side of the Windings. The IDA goal is to slow the migration of the EAB by removing approximately 50 Windings ash trees before May 1, 2007 when the insect becomes active again. This is a one time offer by IDA and will not be offered again as these tree removal funds are limited.

This week IDA staff will begin contacting Windings homeowners of known infested ash trees and provide them with the release forms that permit the State to have their contractor remove residents' tree(s). The trees will be re-inspected and tagged by an IDA staffer. Residents who see evidence of EAB infestation of an ash tree on their property but are not contacted by IDA by March 30, 2007 should phone the IDA field office in DeKalb, IL at 815-787-5476.

Windings residents expressed concern about the voluntary nature of the protocol as this approach would seem to enable non-volunteer residents to leave their infected trees intact, thereby spreading the EAB to more area ash trees sooner. IDA acknowledged that this is a possibility but not likely as the affected homeowners will avoid significant future tree removal and stump grinding costs if they cooperate now. There is no hope of saving an EAB infested ash tree.

One resident handed out literature from a suburban tree specialist that guarantees that they can save healthy ash trees if they are properly treated with known insecticides. IDA acknowledged that it is possible to save healthy trees but it requires fairly expensive, yearly treatments, possibly for the life of the tree. Large older trees do not absorb the insecticide as well as younger smaller trees and may get infected despite treatment. There is also evidence that in the presence of high concentrations of EAB, that no ash tree is safe.

IDA recommends that as more of the Windings ash trees become infested over time, that homeowners call IDA authorized tree removal contractors. These contractors are all listed under the Compliance Agreement Listing on the EAB pages of the IDA website at [www.agr.state.il.us/eab/?pg=6](http://www.agr.state.il.us/eab/?pg=6). Bids should be solicited from three contractors to ensure competitive pricing. Residents who decide to cut down their own ash trees should burn all the ash wood before the following Spring in order to kill the larvae in the tree. In no case should the ash tree wood be transported off a resident's property except by an authorized contractor.

In the future, the Windings Board will be discussing what to do with expected ash tree decline in the Windings' common areas. Limited specific action on these trees is anticipated in 2007 as IDA has identified just a few infested trees in our common areas.

Bill Miller  
President, Windings Homeowner's Association

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