



NEWS

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COURSE OF ACTION RECOMMENDED TO RID KANE COUNTY OF EMERALD ASH BORER

Plan includes tree removal, further survey work to ensure infestation is contained

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – An expert panel appointed by Governor Rod R. Blagojevich has endorsed a strategy to eradicate the emerald ash borer in Kane County and prevent the destructive beetle from infesting ash trees in new areas.

After considering three containment options, the governor's Management and Science Advisory Panel recommended the removal of ash trees within approximately two square miles of the rural area east of Lily Lake where the beetle was first discovered in Illinois.

“While eradication of this pest is our ultimate goal, it may not be possible to remove every ash tree in an infested area,” Warren Goetsch, acting division manager of Natural Resources for the Illinois Department of Agriculture, said. “Portions of the Kane County landscape are heavily wooded and some ash trees are simply inaccessible. Many trees that aren't susceptible to emerald ash borer would have to be cut down just to reach these trees, and even then the terrain may prevent equipment from removing them. We plan to remove as much of the ash tree population in an infested area as possible while minimizing damage to the surrounding area.”

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“Although the loss of trees is unfortunate, I believe that the aggressive approach we endorsed is completely appropriate,” Edith Makra, panel member, arborist and Morton Arboretum Community Trees Advocate, said.

More than 2,800 ash trees are located in the area targeted for tree removal, including approximately 1,700 on private property and public rights of way. Another 1,120 are located in 60-acres of heavily forested area. About 150 ash trees currently are believed to be infested.

Before the tree cutting begins, though, the panel wants additional evidence the infestation is confined by conducting a more intensive survey to verify the infestation’s so-called footprint. This survey would involve 260 ash trees – or five per square mile -- around the perimeter of the removal area, which includes the Windings subdivision. Thus far, visual inspections largely have been used to identify infested trees. However, beetle larvae can feast on a tree several years before it shows visible signs of distress, so they instructed the Illinois Department of Agriculture to perform the more reliable bark-peeling survey, which exposes the larvae if a tree is infested.

The department currently is searching for a marshaling yard to aid in the disposal of cut trees. Ideally, the site will be located within the Kane County quarantine zone, a 51-square mile area where the movement of potentially contaminated ash wood products is restricted to prevent the accidental spread of the beetle. Federal approvals also must be obtained to remove trees. The approvals are required to ensure the project does not adversely impact the habitat of any threatened or endangered species.

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“The USDA is as committed as ever to help Illinois as it develops and implements plans to manage the emerald ash borer,” Steve Knight, panel member and Illinois State Director for USDA APHIS PPQ, said. “Since the first report of EAB in Kane County, the USDA has collaborated with the Illinois Department of Agriculture, providing funds and resources for the training of survey personnel, establishing a USDA EAB Field Office at the Kane County Fairgrounds in St. Charles and formally entering into a cooperative agreement with the department for the efficient pass-through of federal funds for EAB management efforts.”

No recommendations were made concerning Cook County because the severity of the infestation there has not been determined. A survey to identify infested trees in Kane County started June 9 after confirmation of a beetle in the Windings subdivision. A survey to identify infested trees in northern Cook County did not begin until after July 13 when the presence of the beetle was confirmed in Wilmette and was expanded after subsequent finds in Evanston and Winnetka.

The advisory panel consists of EAB experts from the Illinois Department of Agriculture, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA Forest Service, University of Illinois and Morton Arboretum. It is an extension of the Illinois EAB Readiness Team that prepared for the arrival of the emerald ash borer for more than two years.

In addition to a containment strategy, the panel recommended the adoption of a state statute to regulate the movement of firewood, which is the most common cause of the beetle’s artificial spread. It also suggested providing advice on the use of pesticides to control emerald ash borer. Neither the USDA nor Illinois Department of Agriculture currently recommends preventative pesticidal treatments.

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The emerald ash borer is a small, metallic-green beetle native to Asia that has killed more than 20 million ash trees since arriving in North America in 2002. Infestations have been confirmed in five states – Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Maryland and Illinois – as well as Ontario, Canada.

The beetle is difficult to detect, especially in newly-infested trees. Signs of infestation include the presence of metallic-green beetles about half the diameter of a penny on or around ash trees, thinning and yellowing leaves, D-shaped holes in the bark of the trunk or branches and shoots growing from the base of the tree. Anyone who suspects a tree has been infested is urged to contact their county Extension office.

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