

Emerald Ash Borer Eradication Complete

by Scott Brand, The Evening News, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan

BRIMLEY - "We are done," said Communications Specialist Jennifer Quimby of the Michigan Department of Agriculture regarding the aggressive campaign to rid the Upper Peninsula of the emerald ash borer. "No additional positives were found."

The aggressive campaign took down 130 ash trees on state land and more than 400 trees on nearby private property to keep the invasive beetle from gaining a foothold in the Upper Peninsula after it was first discovered in the Brimley State Park during the summer months. The vast majority of the downed trees—approximately 90 percent according to estimates—measured less than 10 inches in diameter and were subsequently burned.

Last month's eradication effort included the removal of all ash trees within a half-mile of the Brimley State Park. Researchers discovered more than a dozen trees inside the park with evidence of larval activity beneath the bark. Three trees were also found with "D-holes" indicating adult beetles had left the host tree.

The emerald ash borer threatens more than 700 million ash trees throughout North America. First discovered in the Lower Peninsula back in July of 2002, the beetle is believed to have been here

for at least 5 years before showing up on the proverbial radar screen.

The beetle, which has no known enemies in this part of the world, is believed to have arrived in the United States aboard wood products or packing material shipped in from either Russia or the Orient. While trees on the other side of the globe have co-existed with the half-inch-long, dark green beetle, our trees seemingly have no such resistance.

The invasive pest is already responsible for the death of more than 16 million ash trees.

The vast majority of damage is done to the tree after the adult beetle deposits its eggs. From there, the immature beetle feeds beneath the bark, slowly starving the tree of needed nutrients which can no longer be carried from the roots to the top. The first visible sign of infestation usually comes in the form of dying crowns but, by that point, it is generally too late to do anything to save the tree from starvation.

Officials believe that the Great Lakes will serve as a natural barrier, protecting the Upper Peninsula from the emerald ash borer until other weapons can be developed to eradicate this pest. The major hurdle to overcome in this effort is not the beetle itself, but residents and visitors who

transport infested wood products to this area—primarily in the form of firewood.

It is believed that the emerald ash borer first gained a toehold in the Upper Peninsula when a camper transported wood from an infested region downstate across the Mackinac Bridge to the Brimley State Park. Authorities now prohibit the transportation of firewood into the Upper Peninsula and have successfully prosecuted at least one smuggler who tried to conceal his supply during a recent bridge crossing.

Restoration Coordinator Kerry Gray explained that there are funds available to help folks in the Brimley area re-plant trees.

"The community impacted can receive up to \$20,000," she said, noting the 50-50 grant can be matched in either cash, labor or supplies.

New plantings can include almost any kind of tree as long as it is not of the ash variety.

Quimby indicated the emerald ash borer appears to be eradicated from the Brimley area, but various teams will continue to monitor this situation for at least three years. The state has similar monitoring efforts going on throughout much of the northern Lower Peninsula and the Upper Peninsula so they can react quickly in the event of a new infestation.