

EAB Stories and Lessons Learned. . .

Learning and sharing how communities are responding to Emerald Ash Borer

“It was like I was standing on the tracks with a freight train coming straight at me and I couldn’t get off.”

This is one quote from a city forester who experienced, firsthand, the chaos caused by emerald ash borer. Preparation is the key to surviving the chaos. The City of Westland, Michigan, (population 86,000) explained just how vital their EAB preparation was.

Westland’s tree inventory was useful a useful tool even before EAB hit. They would use the numbers to contact out much of their tree maintenance. When EAB was discovered, they knew exactly how many trees were at risk, about 3200 or 21% of their entire tree population. From this, removal costs were tabulated and staffing needs projected. Realizing they would need double the staff for all the removals, they pulled people from their streets department. Everyone received intense training specifically on tree removals. Additional equipment was field tested and purchased. Contacts were made for chain saw and equipment maintenance. Due to Westland’s

thorough preparation measures, city crews removed 2000 trees at an average cost of \$620 per tree. The ash died faster than predicted so removals were contracted out when the crews fell behind. Even their best laid plans needed to change as the situation changed.

Special considerations:

- Inventories are critical in planning efforts to forecast budgets for labor, equipment, removal & disposal, training and replanting.
- A well planned response stretches tax dollars, justifies expenditures, reduces liability and shows leadership.
- Communities without a plan or funding will fall into crisis mode when EAB is detected. This overwhelms staff and resources becoming more expensive in the long run.
- Ordinances and policies defining authority and responsibility should be in place before EAB hits.

Your best laid plans will change as the situation changes.

For a more detailed version of this story as well as other community’s stories, visit *Lesson’s Shared – Journal Entries 3, 4, 10 & 11* at <http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/UF/resources/Insider/pdf/EABLessonOne.pdf>.

For a resource to help your community generate their own EAB preparation plan, visit the Emerald Ash Borer Toolkit link at <http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/uf/eab/>.

To help generate a PRIVATE ash inventory in their community, the Village of Holland, Ohio, sent residents an ash identification sheet titled *Do you have an Ash Tree? - Call Me*. They were flooded with calls and were able to generate a somewhat accurate private ash inventory.

Please share what your community is doing to prepare for EAB with others. Send ideas to Olivia Witthun, DNR Urban Forestry Assistant, olivia.witthun@wi.gov.

The first of the *EAB Stories and Lessons Learned – EAB Preparation*, was compiled by Northeast Region Urban Forestry Assistant Olivia Witthun and South Central Urban Forestry Assistant Kathy Gonzalez.