

EAB Confirmed in Vernon County; Area Quarantine Imminent

Madison (April 7, 2009) — Officials with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the Department of Natural Resources today announced that the emerald ash borer (EAB) has been confirmed in Vernon County. The tiny, invasive beetle, whose larva destroys North American ash trees, was discovered in Victory, a small community along the banks of the Mississippi River, about 20 miles south of La Crosse. State officials were made aware of the infestation by an observant property owner.

Vernon County becomes the third infested county in Wisconsin. EAB was discovered in Ozaukee and Washington counties last summer.

“The presence of EAB in Vernon County was confirmed for us Monday morning. Our agency, in concert with other state and federal partners, is now working out the details of surveying the area and learning more about the age and extent of the infestation,” said Rod Nilsestuen, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). “Our staff and federal partners have already visited the area and additional assessments will take place in the coming days to gather information that will help us develop a response plan to this new infestation.”

Because of the proximity to property managed by state and federal entities, and the short distance to counties in Iowa and Minnesota, developing an area-specific response plan will be a coordinated effort with multiple partners.

“We will work closely with DATCP and our neighboring states as we investigate the extent of this new infestation,” said Department of Natural Resources Secretary

Matt Frank. “Invasive species like EAB don’t recognize borders. Working cooperatively we stand a much better chance of limiting our losses and addressing any new sources of infestation.”

Agriculture and natural resources representatives from Minnesota and Iowa will tour the Victory infestation with Wisconsin officials later this week.

One of the first steps in responding to the infestation will be to quarantine movement of hardwood firewood, ash nursery stock, ash timber or any other article that could spread EAB out of the infested area. Federal officials are expected to approve Wisconsin’s quarantine request for Vernon and Crawford counties within days. Following placement of the quarantine there will be a thorough survey of the area to determine the size of the infestation. Colleagues in Iowa and Minnesota are also considering survey options in their respective states.

Area residents can help prevent the spread of EAB and learn more in several ways:

- Follow all quarantine guidelines. For many people, that will mean not moving firewood out of the quarantined area.
- If cutting down ash trees for firewood, use the firewood and burn small branches, etc. before mid-May. Do not move firewood or other material from downed ash trees away from the area where the tree was felled for at least two years.
- If utilizing ash wood to make products other than firewood, follow the guidelines for managing infested wood found at www.emeraldashborer.wi.gov.

Learn about the signs and symptoms of EAB infestation, including the characteristics

of an infested tree. This information can be found at the Wisconsin EAB Program Web site at www.emeraldashborer.wi.gov.

Report suspicious ash trees or request information by calling the Wisconsin EAB Program hotline toll-free at 1-800-462-2803 or filling out the “Report EAB” form on the Web site.

The adult EAB is a metallic-green insect about one-half inch long and one-eighth inch wide. The adult female deposits eggs on the bark of ash trees. The larvae hatching from the eggs chew their way through the bark and into the soft layer of wood just beneath. There, they eat their way through the tree’s vascular system, cutting off the flow of water and nutrients in the tree, leading to decline and eventual death of the tree. EAB is native to Asia and is thought to have arrived in the United States in the early 1990s in suburban Detroit.

There are an estimated 765 million ash trees in Wisconsin’s forests and, on average, one in five urban trees is a species of ash.

The Wisconsin EAB Program is a cooperative, multi-agency effort consisting of representatives from DATCP, DNR, University of Wisconsin–Madison, UW–Extension, USDA APHIS PPQ and the USDA Forest Service.

http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/press_release/result.jsp?prid=2296

Contacts:

Mick Skwarok (DATCP)
Office 608-224-4745
Cell phone 608-219-1492

Bob Manwell (DNR)
Office 608-264-9248
Cell phone 608-209-8148