



Emergency rule bans out-of-state firewood

by Jane Cummings Carlson, (608) 275-3273; Bruce Chevis, (608) 264-8994
DNR Central Office - Madison, for Release: March 22, 2006

MADISON – Out-of-state campers visiting Wisconsin state parks and other state-managed properties this year will have to leave their firewood at home under a new emergency rule that addresses the growing threat of the tree-killing emerald ash borer and other harmful forest pests and diseases.

The emerald ash borer (EAB) is a tiny, green insect native to Asia. It was introduced to the U.S. in the early 1990s in the Detroit, Mich., area and has since spread to Ohio, Indiana and Ontario, Canada, killing more than 15 million ash trees in urban and forest settings.

“EAB is on the move and it’s moving around on firewood,” said Jane Cummings Carlson, forest health coordinator with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. “Since EAB was first identified in Detroit, most of the three dozen or so new infestations found outside that metro area have likely hitchhiked in on firewood.”

The state Natural Resources Board approved the emergency rule at its meeting in Madison today. During 2006, the rule prohibits people visiting Wisconsin state parks, forests, and other DNR-managed properties where campfires are permitted from bringing out-of-state firewood onto those properties. DNR will hold public hearings on the rule at a number of locations throughout the state on April 17. The rule will mostly affect out-of-state campers, but could also affect Wisconsin campers who purchase or chop their own wood in other states. Most campers will not be affected by the proposed rule.

The NRB also plans to urge federal agencies such as USDA, APHIS, and USFS to take a stronger position on the movement of firewood across state lines when invasive pests and diseases are involved.

Wisconsin stands to lose a lot if

EAB arrives in the state and goes unchecked. Native ash trees number around 717 million in state forests and it’s the second most common tree species in communities around the state, accounting for as much as a third of all urban trees.

“An EAB infestation could potentially be more devastating than Dutch elm disease,” Cummings Carlson said. “In states where EAB has been detected, containment and eradication efforts are proving to be extremely difficult and expensive. Keeping an area free from infestation could be easier and is certainly more economical in the long run.”

Ash is often sold as firewood because it doesn’t require curing time before it’s ready to use. It will burn easily and produce a good heat whether it’s fresh or aged.

“Firewood is the Typhoid Mary of emerald ash borer in the Great Lakes,” Cummings Carlson added.

Firewood is available at a reasonable cost at almost every state park, though the hours and locations inside the park may vary. State forests and “flowage” areas where rustic camping can be found typically have firewood available locally – either for sale in nearby communities, or on the property as dead, dry wood.

“We are contacting all out-of-state campers who currently have a state park reservation for this year and letting them know of our plan to restrict firewood movement onto our properties,” said Bruce Chevis, state parks concessions program manager. “The automated reservation system will soon alert campers to this new policy, too.”

“Our park employees will be spreading the word about infested firewood, handing out materials to campers as they check in,” Chevis said. “I think most people will understand that we’re trying to help preserve the quality outdoor experience that many campers have come to expect and appreciate.”

EAB attacks both weakened and healthy ash trees, laying its eggs in the bark of the tree. When the eggs hatch, the tiny larvae burrow into the layers of the tree just under the bark. It’s these layers that move nutrients and water up and down the tree and the larvae wind through them, cutting off the flow of food and water as they eat their way around the tree. An infested tree will die within two to three years.

Public hearings regarding the emergency rule via live videoconference will be held at the following locations across the state on Monday, April 17, from 7 to 8 p.m.:

- ◆ Madison, Rm. 227, The Pyle Center, 702 Langdon St.
- ◆ Milwaukee, Rm. S120, MATC Milwaukee, 700 State St.
- ◆ La Crosse, 102 Wing Communications, 1725 State St., UW La Crosse.
- ◆ Green Bay, Rm. SC207, Northeastern Wis. Technical College, 2740 West Mason St.
- ◆ Eau Claire, Rm. 130, Manufacturing Education Center, Chippewa Valley Technical College, 2320 Alpine Road.

Written comments may be sent to: Andrea Diss-Torrance, Division of Forestry, PO Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707. The deadline for submitting written comment is May 5, 2006. Comments may also be E-mailed or faxed to dnrforestryrules@dnr.state.wi.us or (608) 267-8576.

Additional information about the proposed firewood restrictions and the emerald ash borer can be found on the Invasive Species pages of the DNR Web site. Campers may also call the DNR’s toll-free Firewood Hotline at 1-877-303-WOOD (9663) for information before packing up for a trip. It will be updated frequently with timely information.