

**EMERALD ASH BORER PLAN FOR THE
CITY OF LA CROSSE
PARKS, RECREATION AND FORESTRY DEPARTMENT**

Purpose:

Implementing the provisions in this management plan requires the City of La Crosse to take a proactive approach and spread the costs associated with the outbreak of Emerald Ash Borer over the next ten to twelve years. The loss of every ash tree in La Crosse will happen and will have a devastating effect on home values, quality of life, and our environment. Our goal is to buffer that impact in advance by implementing current arboricultural management techniques.

Introduction:

Emerald ash borer, *Agilus planipennis* (Fairmaire), or EAB, is a non-native wood-boring pest of North America ash trees. The devastating pest was first found in 2002 in North America where it was discovered in southeastern Michigan and adjacent areas in Ontario, Canada. It is thought to have been introduced in the 1990s on solid wood packing materials originating in Asia. The extremely destructive beetle poses an enormous threat to all North America's rural and urban ash resources.

Unlike many other wood boring beetles, EAB aggressively kills stressed and healthy ash trees; most dying within two or three years of becoming infested. Currently, EAB has no known natural enemies in North America, no effective control options over the forested landscape, and few, expensive options for protecting individual, high-value specimen trees. If EAB is not contained or its population growth and spread are not slowed this pest will continue to infest and kill all species of trees in the genus *Fraxinus* (*ash*). The impact on ash in North America has been compared to the effects of chestnut blight and Dutch Elm Disease, which devastated rural and urban forests in the 20th century.

Since its initial North American discovery in Michigan, EAB has spread across the upper Midwest and by 2009, had been found in 12 states and the provinces of Ontario and

Quebec, Canada. Forestry experts and stakeholders in New York have been keeping a keen eye on the progression of EAB eastward and been cooperating with USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) on extensive detection surveys and trapping efforts to try to detect any infestations in our State as early as possible. As of August 2010, 15 states and 2 Canadian provinces (Ontario and Quebec) have confirmed EAB discoveries.

According to the APHIS National EAB Program Manual (2009), "The Emerald Ash Borer Program has transitioned from an eradication program to a management program. Effective and cost efficient control technologies are not currently available to apply area-wide to effect pest eradication. In the future additional tools may become available to suppress the dispersal of the pest.

Local Situation:

EAB is an introduced pest that is currently killing all species of ash trees (*Fraxinus* species). The City of La Crosse must prepare and manage for the arrival of EAB on two fronts - street or boulevard trees, and trees on other public properties such as parks, Forest Hills Golf Course, and Hixon Forest.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, EAB entered into the corporate limits of the City of La Crosse during the fall season of 2011. Additionally, an EAB infested tree was confirmed by the Department of Agriculture during the month of October, 2012. This particular ash tree was located in the parking lot of Valley View Mall. It has since been removed.

Per our inventory, we estimate that there are 4,500 ash trees located on public boulevards, 1400 in city parks, approximately 110 on Forest Hills Golf Course, and a number, not yet determined, within Hixon Forest. (Current inventory data is currently being updated concerning species numbers within Hixon Forest by the University of Wisconsin Extension Service). Therefore, the total number of ash trees on public property would be conservatively 6,160 trees. The greater majority of these trees on public boulevards would be 35' – 45' in height, since ash was the primary species planted following the Dutch Elm Disease. More mature species of ash are found in public parks, Forest Hills Golf Course and private property.

The current evidence from Michigan and Ohio show that once EAB becomes established it takes about five to ten years to infest and kill the majority of ash trees in the city. (datcservices.wisconsin.gov/eab/index.jsp)

Disposal and Utilization:

Ash trees killed by EAB or those taken as part of management plan may result in a significant number of trees. As a result, one of the largest challenges in EAB management will be disposal and utilization of ash material. Because quarantine regulations restrict the movement of ash material out of quarantined areas (with some exceptions), wood utilization becomes even more difficult. These restrictions may limit the ability to use this material as commercial landscape mulch, wood pulp chips and solid wood products (lumber, railroad ties).

Given the potentially large volume of resulting wood debris, wood utilization issues are of primary concern. The state EAB task force is currently gathering information regarding the location of potential utilization assets, such as biomass fuel users, firewood processors, tree care firms, sawmills, pulp mills, mulch manufacturers, and landfills. The City of La Crosse is exploring local wood utilization options and will weigh them against options provided by the EAB task force.

Because of the restrictions on the disposition of infested ash wood require a much greater expense than dealing in a “pro-active” measure....removing the trees prior to their infestation, and, recognizing the experience of numerous municipalities in Michigan and other states (the sheer volume of dead and dying trees and having them removed prior to numerous liability issues) the City of La Crosse will commence dealing with this inevitable infestation in a pro-active approach. Reference the attached: “Resolution authorizing the Park Department and Park Board to remove ash trees from City owned parks and facilities”. This resolution will be “short circuited” and acted upon at the regularly scheduled common council December cycle. The precedent that this resolution will display to the public will be extremely important in the City of La Crosse “leading by example” rather than dealing as a “reaction” to a situation.

Administration:

The Director of the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department will be responsible for implementing and follow up on the provisions of this plan.

Communication:

The Mayor, City Council, Board of Public Works, Board of Park Commissioners, will receive periodic updates through normal channels. All media relations will follow normal city protocol.

Boulevard Tree Strategy:

1. The City will adopt a policy of NOT planting any ash trees on public property or boulevards.
2. The city will recommend that citizens and businesses discontinue the use of ash in new plantings.
3. The City will remove boulevard ash trees at citizens' request.
4. The forestry crew, in conjunction with private contractors, will remove poor quality trees or trees with major defects. Communication with the property owner will occur prior to removal.
5. Initial concentration of boulevard ash tree removal will focus on the highest density area of that species. That area is bounded by State Street, 7th Street, Losey Boulevard and Market Street.
6. Removed ash trees will be replaced on a 1:1 ratio. Species diversity is a planting objective that will better protect our community's urban forest.
7. Plantings will occur in the spring and fall per the department operating procedures and as funds are available.
8. Citizens are allowed to re-plant boulevard trees at their expense if they do not want to wait for the city to plant. They are encouraged to participate in the current Parks, Recreation, & Forestry department "no cost/tree planting permit" for public boulevards. However, we strongly discourage the planting of maples as they will become infested by another the Asian Longhorned Beetle, which is in the Chicago area.
9. Citizens are "invited" via the local media to participate in "adopt a tree program" to treat their respective boulevard ash trees at their expense. Additionally the public will be asked to notify this department if they are participating in a

treatment program. This department will keep a database of these trees/addresses.

10. \$30,000.00 is budgeted in the City of La Crosse Capital Project (2013) budget specifically for the removal of ash trees.
11. Additionally, \$165,000.00 is programmed in the 2014 Capital Improvement Budget for the removal of ash trees. Future monetary requests of the Capital Budget will be re-evaluated on a regular basis.
12. Three grants have been submitted for the replacement of removed ash trees. DNR tree planting grant request, along with grant request of the Community Foundation, and Paul E. Stry Foundation are pending approval. Two of these grant requests, DNR and the Community Foundation were submitted by the Wisconsin Youth Conservation Corps for their joint participation in this replacement program in conjunction with the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department.
13. La Crosse City/County "Sustainability Policies" are deemed of utmost importance and will be instituted and practiced when feasible.
14. City of La Crosse street reconstruction projects commencing in the 2013 construction season and later dates, will make provision for the automatic removal (following communication with property owners) of adjacent ash trees (with the exception of those currently being treated by property owners). Additionally, funds will be provided for the replacement trees in each respective contract in the future.

Barron Island including Pettibone Park, Pettibone Campground, Pettibone Boat Club, Copeland Park, and Forest Hills Golf Course:

See attached resolution (Attachment A) for action concerning the primary park ash concentrations.

Other Park Trees including Riverside, Myrick, Houska, and Weigent:

Other parks will be dealt with via existing city forces during the winter of 2012 to spring of 2013. Additionally, city forces in partnership with private contractors will begin to remove all ash trees with priority given to trees in poor and structurally defective conditions; these trees being removed first. Removal will commence winter of 2012.

Hixon Forest:

Ash trees in the Hixon Forest will be left alone unless adjacent to trails or service roads that may cause harm if it falls. If it is an early EAB infestation, we will be removing the infested trees as needed, to slow the spread to the community.

Ash Trees Located On Private Property:

The City of La Crosse will not remove ash trees on private property. Citizens are highly encouraged to participate in an annual treatment program, which will reduce the likelihood of their ash trees becoming infected, but do not necessarily guarantee the longevity of their ash trees. These treatment programs can be completed by current Department of Agriculture license holders, or securing information from this department concerning acceptable systemic insecticides. CITIZENS ARE HIGHLY DISCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE IN TREATMENT PROGRAMS THAT INVOLVE UNLICENSED APPLICATORS OR UNACCEPTABLE/UNAPPROVED SELF PURCHASE SYSTEMIC INSECTICIDES. ADDITIONALLY, CITIZENS WILL BE HIGHLY ENCOURAGED TO MAKE DECISIONS CONCERNING THEIR ASH TREES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. ONCE THE INFESTATION SETS IN, TREES WILL DIE AT A VERY RAPID RATE, THE AVAILABILITY OF PRIVATE REMOVAL SERVICES WILL BECOME MORE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE IN A TIMELY FASHION, AND FINANCIAL RATES FOR TREE REMOVAL WILL ESCALATE.

In the event that property owners do not remove dead trees, thereby eliminating potential liability issues for both themselves and others, current city codes provide for the "order to correct" and will be strictly enforced.

La Crosse Bluffland Preservation Program:

Ash trees located on Knowles Nelson Stewardship; properties under Mississippi Valley Conservancy easements and land management contracts with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will be evaluated in 2013. A separate EAB plan will be developed in concert with the WI DNR and MVC. This plan will require separate approval from WI DNR and be inclusive of comments and recommendations from MVC.

Objectives:

1. Stay ahead of the EAB infestation to avoid a sudden impact to resources
2. Educate the public and act as a referral service to disseminate information
3. Remove trees that will cause safety issues
4. Replace trees on a ratio of 1:1
5. Spread out the removal and replacement program over a 7 year period for city park trees
6. Develop a WI DNR plan for dealing with EAB on Knowles Nelson Stewardship Properties that is consistent with habitat and natural areas goals

Plan Timetable:

Phase I

Dec 2012- March 2013	Removal Program (Attachment A)
Dec 20112- Continuous 7 Years	Public Awareness/ Referral/ Treatment of selected trees
Dec 2012- Continuous 7 Years	Removal as needed safety related issues arise

Phase II

Aug 2013- March 2014	Removal of boulevard trees based upon citizens' request and replacement trees based upon budget
----------------------	---

Phase III

Feb 2014- Feb 2015	Continuous removal of city park trees on an "as needed" basis with replacement based upon budget
--------------------	--

Phase IV

Mar 2015- Mar 2019	Maintenance of treated trees and continuous removal and replacement as trees deteriorate across the park system
--------------------	---