

Columbus Recreation and Parks Department Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan

Introduction

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is an Asiatic insect that was inadvertently introduced into the United States via shipping pallets from China. The first known infestation occurred in Michigan in 2002. Since then, it has spread throughout Michigan and into Ontario, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. A small infestation was also found in Maryland. The natural spread of the insect is relatively slow, unfortunately it can be transported on firewood and nursery stock, which has hastened its' spread through the Great Lakes region. All ash trees are susceptible to the insect and will die in one to three years following infestation.

Purpose

It is the intent of this plan to mitigate the disruption of our urban forest from the impending infestation of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). Taking a proactive approach to the oncoming invasion will allow the city to address public and private needs in an efficient and effective manner. The City will endeavor to distribute the costs of tree removal and tree replacement over a manageable time period in order to lessen the social and economic impact upon our community.

The Columbus Recreation and Parks Department will be responsible for the implementation of this plan and the City Forester will be responsible for the management and coordination of the effort. The Department will cooperate, communicate with and follow all Ohio Department of Agriculture rules and regulations regarding EAB issues.

Ash Tree Removal

The City will utilize the existing street tree inventory and conduct park tree inventories to determine ash tree removal needs. The inventory will include size, condition and location in order to establish priorities. A tree removal plan will be developed from the inventory information. Hazardous trees will be removed first, followed by dying, declining and poorly located trees. Utility companies will be encouraged to remove all ash within their easements as part of their normal line clearance operations. A database will be established to track, monitor and record removals, stumps and replacement needs.

Wood Waste

All wood chips and logs will be disposed of within Franklin County in accordance with ODA rules. Wood chips will be used in parks, playgrounds, or ground into mulch for use in gardens. Logs will be transported to the Southerly Composting Facility for use in producing ComTil.

Tree Replacement

All tree removals will be recorded on a database for future replacement. Columbus currently has a program through the Mayors Green Initiative to plant 4000 trees a year for five years with a goal to plant 20,000 trees by the end of 2010. Tree removals within this time period can be replaced through this program. This plan should be extended after 2010 to deal with EAB replacements.

Private Trees

The City will create and maintain an EAB information page on the City's website. The City strongly recommends that private property owners in infested neighborhoods remove their ash trees. The City will not order the removal of private ash trees unless the tree is infested and represents a potential hazard. The Forestry Section will work with the Code Enforcement Section on private tree removals to ensure public safety.

Budget

The existing workload of the Forestry Section cannot be delayed or postponed to deal with EAB issues. Additional resources will be required to respond to this emergency. First priority is to hire an additional Arborist to coordinate the EAB program. Once the Arborist has assessed the existing street tree inventory information and surveyed area parks in infested areas, tree removal plans can be developed. Estimated budget to deal with EAB citywide is \$3.6 million to remove 12,000 street trees and \$2.4 million to replant new trees. Ideally, these costs can be allocated over a ten year period. Actual time frame will be dependent on the rate of spread of the insect.

Contacts

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