

EAB Lessons Learned in Michigan and Ohio

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The Wisconsin DNR Urban Forestry staff and two supervisors recently spent two days visiting communities in southern Michigan and northern Ohio to learn firsthand how communities are responding to emerald ash borer infestation.

Michigan DNR and Ohio DNR and Extension staff arranged for the group to meet with representatives of eight communities, each employing an assortment of management options to address staggering tree mortality and critical wood utilization issues.

Several recurrent themes emerged as communities shared lessons they have learned.

Define roles. Many players are involved when EAB comes to town. It is critical to agree on specific roles for federal, state and local government staff and for business, nonprofits, volunteers, etc., to ensure all resources are engaged and to avoid overlap, miscommunication or turf battles. Ordinances or policies defining authority and responsibility should be in place before EAB hits.

Start planning early. Unfortunately most communities, even in Michigan and Ohio, are in denial until an infestation hits locally. When EAB is finally detected, populations often surge and management shifts quickly into crisis mode. Tree removals become a major workload, quickly overcoming resources and staff capabilities. Planning before this happens is critical.

Seeing is believing. Support from elected officials for this early planning is essential, but very tough to get. The more you engage elected officials through presentations, site visits and bus trips the more successful you'll be.

Inventories, even if just of the ash population, are critical to early planning efforts and forecasting budgets for labor, equipment, staff training and restoration. This was universally stressed by every community we talked to.

Visual surveys should start at the tops of trees. While tree girdling is currently the best method available for systematic detection surveys, an infestation may still go undetected. Ohio and Michigan communities are finding infestations first in the tops of mid-sized trees before any symptoms are visible from the ground. So, in addition to the state's detection surveys, to assure that we find EAB early, it is important for arborists to be looking for the characteristic D-shaped hole and other signs of EAB during their routine treetop work in ash.

Wood disposal must be addressed. Additional planning is needed for wood utilization. Profit is unlikely, but utilization can minimize disposal issues and eliminate or offset disposal costs.

Funding will be needed, period. Communities will need to find funds to cover the huge expense of equipment, removals, disposal and replanting. One community set up a trust fund for donations. Another deferred the purchase of a \$1 million fire engine for five years to pay for the cost of removing ash. EAB will be a public safety issue that trumps even fire protection! The loss of tree canopy will also increase other expenses. One community found that their water bills spiked upward 33% due to increased watering of previously shaded lawns and gardens now baking in the sun. Storm water runoff and electricity use for air conditioning could also increase.

Waiting and doing nothing will be more expensive. It costs two to three times more to remove a completely dead ash tree versus a declining but live tree. Waiting until EAB hits before you make a plan to remove, dispose of and replant your ash will leave you with no contractors available, no markets for your waste wood and no trees to buy and plant. Communities that planned ahead have funds to replant. Those that waited to react do not.

The group also visited a Michigan community that is treating public ash trees with systemic insecticides and a cooperative ash research study conducted by The Ohio State University and the City of Toledo, located on a city boulevard. Results of these studies and further conclusions drawn from our trip will be shared in future issues.

To get your community started planning for EAB, visit our EAB Toolkit Web site at <http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/uf/eab/> or contact your regional urban forestry coordinator (see page 16). To stay current

on EAB, subscribe to the *Wisconsin Urban Forestry Insider* e-newsletter at <http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/uf/> or visit the Wisconsin EAB Web portal at <http://emeraldashborer.wi.gov/>.