

VERMONT URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM

EAB Municipal Management Case Study

Waterbury, Vermont

APPROACH

Select ash tree removal, tree planting, volunteer wood utilization project

SUMMARY

A committed group of municipal staff and volunteers has long supported the stewardship of trees in Waterbury's public ways and places. Since Tropical Storm Irene in 2011, the municipality and State have invested in planting prominent downtown street trees. Ongoing, however, has been the replanting and maintenance of trees in other municipal spaces such as cemeteries, parks, and recreation areas, many of which host ash trees that will be lost to emerald ash borer if not treated with insecticide. Waterbury is well poised to manage the impact of ash tree loss, having conducted a downtown tree inventory in 2016 and a roadside ash inventory in 2018 and 2019 with assistance from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission. The town also approved a 2020 Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan written by Redstart, Inc.

Using grant funding and municipal match, Waterbury planned to remove some of the inventoried ash trees in fair, poor, and dead condition along Gregg Hill, Maggie's Way, and Shaw Mansion Road. Potter's Tree Healthcare provided one of two bids and was selected to remove 20 ash trees using bucket trucks in October of 2021.

The municipality knew that it would have a lot of large ash logs that, if refused by the landowner abutting the right-of-way, could have a second life as firewood. After brainstorming ideas with the

Waterbury Congregational Church and Rotary Club of Waterbury, municipal staff and volunteers decided to stockpile ash logs greater than 8-inches diameter at the Town Material Storage Area near the Ice Center at the end of River Road. This provided an unobstructed space where volunteers from the tree board and Rotary Club could then buck and split the wood to be sold as firewood. Proceeds went entirely to the Waterbury Good Neighbor Fund and Rotary Club of Waterbury to support people in need and cultural exchanges with local youth and residents.

To fulfill a grant requirement to replant non-ash tree species in public spaces and to continue the mission of the tree committee to plan for and manage urban and community tree canopy, the tree commission presented a proposal to the town cemetery commission to plant 15 new trees. During the summer of 2021, the tree committee hired Evergreen Gardens of Vermont, a landscape firm based in Waterbury Center, to provide, plant, and guarantee six Greenspire lindens, three white spruce, two Royal Raindrop crabapples, and four Celebration maples. The trees were planted in existing greenspace in Hope Cemetery bordering Winooski Street and are maintained by municipal staff.

FAST FACTS

Population: 5,151

Miles of Town Maintained Roads: 56

Number of Ash Inventoried on Town Roads Prior to Removals: 657

Normal Management of Public Trees: The tree warden and town highway (road) crew address risk trees on a case-by-case basis. The town can contract arborists for tree maintenance in the village center.

Active Tree Board or Conservation Commission: A six-member tree committee includes active tree warden and Town Planning and Zoning Director Steve Lotspeich.

Local Tree Ordinance: None at present.

Ash Inventory Conducted: Waterbury volunteers conducted the ash tree inventory in stages during 2018 and 2019 with assistance from Ashley Andrews (Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission) and Meredith Whitney (formerly of UVM Extension and the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program). The inventory team utilized VTANR's Roadside Ash Inventory Data Collection project hosted by the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program.

EAB First Detected: EAB has not yet been detected in Waterbury but has been confirmed in neighboring towns. The western and eastern portions of Waterbury are currently considered to be within Vermont's EAB infested area.

Written EAB Management Plan: A draft EAB plan for Northfield was approved by the Northfield Conservation Commission in October 2018.

Ash Management Status in 2021: Completed removal of 20 ash trees in fair, poor, or dead condition within municipal rights-of-way in 2021, planted 15 trees on municipal property at Hope Cemetery, and, outside of the grant-funded project, treated three ash trees on municipal property with a trunk-injected insecticide.

Key Players: Members of the Waterbury tree committee including the tree warden; members of the town cemetery commission; Potter's Tree Healthcare; Evergreen Gardens of Vermont.

Funding: \$6,500 grant from the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program for the pilot project matched by \$6,500 of tree purchases paid for by the municipality; volunteer time for tree planting.

Wood Utilization: Potter's Tree Service chipped brush and treetops on site and removed chips. The municipality offered the wood to abutting landowners but all landowners decided to donate the wood to a fundraiser. Logs approximately 8" DBH and larger were transported to the Town Material Storage Area where they were bucked and split by volunteers. Residents purchased the firewood for \$275 per cord or \$150 per half-cord and donated the money to either the Waterbury Good Neighbor Fund administered by the Waterbury Congregational Church or to the Rotary Club of Waterbury. Volunteers from the Waterbury tree committee and Rotary Club donated time, some use of chainsaws and splitters, and vehicles to transport some firewood.

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Harvested roadside ash trees ready for bucking and splitting.

COST OF PILOT PROJECT

Activity	Pilot Project	Pilot Work Personnel
Treatment	<p>1 46"-DBH ash tree in Hope Cemetery Total cost: \$552 (\$12/diameter inch)</p> <p>2 ash trees in Hope Davey Park Total cost: \$468</p>	Vermont Arborists
Removal	<p>Removal of 20 ash trees along three rural roads:</p> <p>Total cost: \$6,500 Average cost per tree: \$325</p>	Potter's Tree Healthcare
Replanting	<p>Purchase and planting of 15 trees</p> <p>Total cost: \$6,491.75 Average cost per tree: \$433</p>	Evergreen Gardens of Vermont provided both the nursery stock, planting labor, and three-year guarantee on the trees.



Volunteers split and load donated roadside ash logs.

ON THE GROUND

We decided to utilize the roadside ash logs as firewood for residents sold as part of a fundraiser for two local non-profits. The utilization program has been impactful but labor-intensive. The biggest challenge has been rallying volunteers to get the bucking and splitting done.

Steve Lotspeich, Waterbury Tree Warden and Planning & Zoning Director

Read more about Waterbury's roadside ash wood utilization in this [October 2021 article](#) in the Waterbury Roundabout.



Three white spruce planted in Hope Cemetery.



Steve Lotspeich at a 2021 Arbor Day tree planting site.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Continue to plant a diverse array of downtown tree species.** Waterbury has a long history of active tree stewards but is benefitting now from a renewed interest in public green spaces. Plan to purchase and plant a diverse array of tree species in many downtown and managed parks to ensure healthy tree canopy for future generations. Understand site conditions that will dictate the success or failure of certain tree species.
- **Raise awareness about emerald ash borer.** Many residents know about emerald ash borer but because it is not yet prevalent in Waterbury, most have not seen its impact. Continuing to raise awareness about the importance of planning for ash tree loss in managed landscapes and along rural roads continues to be part of the work of the tree committee.
- **Work towards a long-term plan.** Waterbury continues to grow its urban tree canopy and make steps towards removal of hazardous roadside ash trees. However, a long-term plan and budget for ash tree management is not yet in place. The tree committee recognizes this planning as a necessary next step.
- **Think proactively.** Know that removal of ash trees when healthy will be cheaper and safer than removing them when they are dead.

Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program
Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation in
partnership with University of Vermont Extension

