

Vermont Forest Pest Planning: *Is your community prepared?*

Three highly invasive forest pests—the emerald ash borer (EAB), Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) and hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA), threaten Vermont’s woodlands, urban forests and the goods and services these provide. Maples, ash, hemlocks and other host species that could be attacked by these pests make up nearly two-thirds of the trees in Vermont. While the hemlock woolly adelgid was detected in Windham County in 2007, the other two pests have yet to arrive in Vermont.

EAB is an insect that was introduced to the U.S. from Asia in 2002 and attacks all species of ash native to North America. It has led to the death of millions of ash trees from Michigan to New York. There are more than 100 million ash trees in Vermont’s woodlands, downtowns and roadsides. Unless treated with insecticides, most trees infested by EAB will die within 2 to 4 years. Experience in Michigan and other states has shown that once EAB is detected in an area, more detections follow quickly and loss of ash trees increases rapidly over a few short years. If we can slow the spread of EAB and ash mortality, we can buy time for research to provide us with more options for managing EAB.

The following resources will help you work through the process of planning for a pest infestation:

- **Vermont Forest Pest Planning Worksheet**—assists in assessing your community’s level of preparedness and prioritizing action steps.
- **Vermont Forest Pest Planning: Community Resource Toolbox**—provides links and background information on all aspects of preparedness and response.
- **Vermont Forest Pest Planning: Communications Toolkit**—contains example press releases, and other educational materials for educating your community.

A Forest Pest Preparedness & Response Plan is a document that outlines a municipality’s objectives and the approaches it will use to meet anticipated costs, public concerns, and environmental impacts; explore opportunities for wood disposal; and initiate steps to mitigate impact.

We expect EAB to arrive in Vermont within a few years. If there are ash trees in your community we expect most, if not all, will die when EAB shows up. Prepared or unprepared, your community will have to deal with a large number of hazardous trees within a short time frame. A proactive response plan will be invaluable in addressing the threat by allowing you to:

- Modify budgets to accommodate increased tree-related costs and spread the costs/losses over a longer period of time.
- Provide/arrange for debris disposal space.
- Inform citizens about forest pests & dealing with private trees
- Determine public policy for designating trees to be preserved and replacing trees that are lost.
- Ease costs by: forming partnerships, brokering group or volume prices, prearranging contracts, and seeking grants.

It’s better to look ahead and prepare than look back with regret.

Vermont Forest Pest Planning: Process

1. **Form a local Forest Pest Planning Team**—Team members will help develop and implement the plan, keep abreast of information and communicate with residents.
2. **Brief the decision-makers**—Meet with your community's leadership and bring them up to speed on the issue. State staff can provide technical support with the latest information and strategies. Resources for briefing decision makers are available in the Vermont Forest Pest Planning: Communications Toolkit.
3. **Develop a timeline and who is responsible for writing the plan**—If you don't hire a consultant then decide whether one person will write it or whether team members will be tasked with researching and drafting certain sections. What is the timeline and process for developing, reviewing and adopting your preparedness plan?
4. **Conduct a rapid assessment of your community's level of preparedness and prioritize what action steps need to be taken to prepare your community**—This assessment will help your community identify the policies, protocols, resources (equipment, labor and funding) and other actions needed to efficiently and effectively respond to a pest infestation. Use the Vermont Forest Pest Planning Worksheet.
5. **Formalize the information and action steps into a forest pest preparedness plan** and have it officially adopted by the Selectboard, Conservation Commission and/or other appropriate town committees.
6. **Implement your preparedness plan.**

For assistance with please contact:

Meredith Whitney
UVM Extension
655 Spear Street
Burlington, VT 05405
Meredith.Whitney@uvm.edu
802-656-7746

Jim Esden
VT Dept. of Forests, Parks & Rec.
100 Mineral Street, Suite 304
Springfield, VT 05156-3168
Work Phone: 802-885-8822
Cell Phone: 802-777-1591
jim.esden@vermont.gov

Neil Monteith
Dept. of Forests, Parks & Rec.
1229 Portland Street, Suite 201
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819-2099
Work Phone: 802-751-0118
neil.monteith@vermont.gov

Learn more:
<http://vtcommunityforestry.org/community-planning/tree-pests>