VERMONT FOREST PEST PLANNING

ROADSIDE ASH TREE INVENTORY

Bennington

PLANT LIVE GROW

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Vermont Forest Pest Planning Case Studies were developed to share the process that nine Vermont communities undertook to inventory their town's ash trees and develop an Emerald Ash Borer Preparedness Plan. These towns varied widely in population, size, and resources, which makes each town's experience and lessons learned unique.

Bordering two states with current EAB infestations, New York and Massachusetts, puts Bennington at considerable risk for the first Vermont discovery of the emerald ash borer (EAB). Shelly Stiles, the District manager for the Bennington County Conservation District, worked with Vince Royce, a First Detector and arborist from the area, to inventory the ash trees along Bennington's roadways. Shelly and the Bennington County Conservation District not only coordinated the inventory but also provided technical support.

Creating a preparedness plan for the sixth most populous town in Vermont builds upon the other invasive insect and plant outreach work that has taken place in the past. As Shelly noted, "Since we are located where we are, we have done a lot of training regarding Asian longhorn beetle, the hemlock wooly adelgid and EAB over the years. So this is a logical evolution and builds on these trainings." Shelly and Vince created awareness on the issue and inventory project through an article in the local Bennington Banner newspaper and Bennington's Facebook page. Through these outreach methods they were able to recruit volunteers who were knowledgeable in ash tree identification to work on the inventory. Shelly also took students from Sunderland Elementary School out for a day of inventory.

Due to the large number of roadways, it would have been a huge task to inventory everything. The town was categorized into sections, such as new neighborhoods, old neighborhoods, downtown roads, and growth center roads. A representative section of each category was inventoried. Following the collection and entry of the data, ArcGIS maps were created by the Hazard Mitigation Planner with the Bennington Regional Planning Commission. The maps were presented to the town planning commission.

The District used the EAB incentive to bring a New York DOT employee up from Ulster Country, NY to speak to road crews about his experience dealing with EAB infestations and road cleanup.

FAST FACTS

LOCATION: The town of Bennington is located in the southwestern corner of Vermont.

POPULATION: 15,737

LAND AREA: 55.28 miles^2

MILES OF TOWN-MAINTAINED ROADS: 99.4

MILES OF ROAD INVENTORIED: 31 miles

ASH TREES INVENTORIED: 638

TIME: 30 volunteer hours

PROJECT PARTNERS: Bennington County Conservation District, Bennington County Regional Planning Commission, First Detector volunteers, Sunderland Elementary School, Bennington Co. Forester

FINANCIAL RESOURCES: Urban & Community Forestry Program $500 EAB Incentive

EQUIPMENT: Survey sheets, clipboards, maps, and binoculars.

PLANNING RESOURCES: Resources on VTinvasives.org

SUNDERLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS HELPED SHELLY STILES WITH THE ASH TREE INVENTORY.

HOW THEY DID IT

Roadside walking, biking and windshield survey

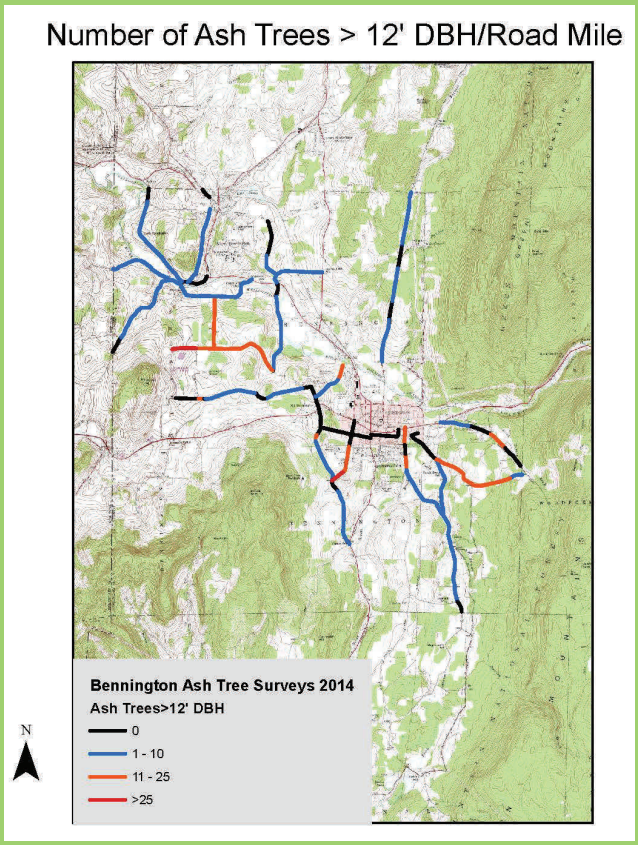
1. Volunteers inventoried a representative section of roads including densely settled neighborhoods, downtown roads, growth center roads, and utility right-of-ways (ROW).
2. Data was recorded for all ash within the road ROW or that could impact the ROW. (The ROW is 3 rods on all roads, which is 24.9′ from the road center line.).
3. Data was analyzed and trees were mapped using GIS.

Parameters Collected

Diameter at breast height in increments: <6″, 6-12″, 12″ +

Location—Recorded by side of the road but specific locations of ash trees were not recorded. Ash were tallied by road to provide ash tree density/road.

Notes—observations of hazardous trees, woodpecker activity, etc.



If organizations like ours and others around the state are taking advantage of the experience of others in the Northeast who have already begun to deal with this, I think we would all do better in the end.

-Shelly Stiles, Bennington County Conservation District

LESSONS LEARNED

- The best time to survey is the beginning of winter/end of spring; when the weather is mild and the trees are dormant and have no leaves.
- Be realistic about how much time it will take and seek out volunteers willing to commit to an all day inventory or fundraise to pay for people to do it.
- Partners, such as the County Conservation District and Regional Planning Commission, can provide additional technical assistance, such as mapping, and coordination.

Case study prepared by the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program, a joint initiative between UVM Extension and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, using a template created by the Vermont Green Infrastructure Initiative.