

Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee

Emerald Ash Borer Response

Position Statement Adopted October 22, 2009

In response to the identification of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) in St. Paul May 14, 2009 and within 1/10 mile of Houston County in April, and the expected identification of EAB in additional neighborhoods and cities in Minnesota in 2010, the Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee (MnSTAC) supports and encourages:

Legislative allocation of funds for removal and replacement of diseased and infested trees and for assistance to local governments for appropriate planning and assessment of forest health and implementation of adopted plans.

Response, planning, and forest management efforts related to EAB will overwhelm the resources of lead state agencies and local municipalities, as evidenced by the experience of other states. When it was found in St. Paul, volunteers had to be recruited from other agencies, municipalities and organizations to identify infested trees and delimit the extent of the infestation. None of the communities affected by the Houston County quarantine have staff with the technical skills that are needed for adequate preparedness planning. State agencies rely on a network of trained First Detectors to make initial investigation of suspected cases of EAB infestations. Most are employees of a specific organization or unit of government with a limited area of service so there are gaps in coverage across the state.

Now is the opportune time to strengthen our preparedness and limit the loss of ash trees by using integrated management and a unified command structure to slow the spread of EAB. Money is needed for education, inspecting, removal of trees known to be infested, suppression of EAB populations, and other management strategies. Early action is a critical element in slowing the spread; giving Minnesota communities valuable time to prepare for and the resources needed to respond to infestations. In rare situations eradication may be possible.

Years after EAB was first found, the devastating effects caused by this beetle are still being felt in Michigan and other eastern states. Millions of trees were lost at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars. Minnesota is home to an estimated 900 million ash trees in forests in municipal and rural landscapes throughout Minnesota. If left unchecked, additional infestations will burden communities throughout the state and detrimentally change our forest ecosystems by affecting water resources, increasing energy costs, and reducing habitat, among other impacts.

A single EAB infestation has the potential to devastate a small community that lacks the staff and facilities to identify insect populations and provide for the timely sanitation necessary to slow the spread of this insect. A modest investment now can go a long way in protecting communities as they deal with managing their ash resource. The substantial and urgent costs incurred once EAB detection occurs warrant state resources being allocated to these needs.

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Since 1974, the Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee (MnSTAC) has advised the State Legislature on community forestry issues. MnSTAC is the key advisor on the best ways to preserve, protect, expand, and improve Minnesota's urban and community forests; and promote and facilitate the coordination of efforts being made by the multitude of jurisdictions and entities which own and affect our urban and community forests. Members represent a broad spectrum of tree related interests. MnSTAC fosters and supports local community tree programs across the state.

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MNSTAC POLICY STATEMENT

"Community Forests: Our Legacy and our Future"

