

Emerald Ash Borer Options for District Assistance

Overview

On May 23, 2007, the Emerald Ash Borer was found in eastern Hamilton County, resulting in the quarantine of Hamilton County by the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Being quarantined means that any firewood or ash material (such as trees, limbs, branches, wood chips larger than 1", and ash with bark or outer 1/2" of sapwood attached) cannot leave Hamilton County and enter a county not under quarantine. Currently, the other southwestern Ohio counties under quarantine are Warren, Montgomery, and Butler counties.

Although there is no count on the number of ash trees in Hamilton County, throughout the state approximately one out of every ten trees is ash. Some municipalities and townships have an inventory of the number of ash trees, including the City of Cincinnati, which has ~5,000 street trees that are ash; however, these counts do not include private ash trees.

In response to the quarantine, the Policy Committee conducted a special meeting to understand the effects of the Emerald Ash Borer. During the discussion, the Committee recommended Staff initiate a meeting to develop options on how the District can help residents and communities address the effects of the Emerald Ash Borer.

On June 28th, the Emerald Ash Borer taskforce met to discuss ways the District can assist Hamilton County communities and residents manage the amount of wood waste that will be generated over the next several years. Topics discussed included: public education, consumer protection, managing wood waste, and developing outlets for ash trees. This report summarizes the meeting and includes steps the District might undertake.

The following people participated in the taskforce: David Moore (Village of Greenhills), Jerry Janszen (Building Value), Paul Braasch (Adams-Clermont Solid Waste District), Damon Hartley (OSU), Joe Boggs (OSU Extension), Pat Migliozi (ODNR – Forestry), Casey Munchel (ODNR – Forestry), Dave Gamstetter (Cincinnati Park Board), Sam Sherrill (U.C.), Joseph Charlton (City of Cincinnati), Glenn Welling (District Policy Committee), Alan Warner (GBBN Architects), Tom Bosarge (Colerain Township Parks), Dan Walter (Blue Ash), Dennis Cunningham (Blue Ash), Rodney Clark (Blue Ash), Mary Mulford (composting representative).

Options for District Assistance

There are several options for the District and Hamilton County to assist with the Emerald Ash Borer, such as public education, consumer protection, wood waste management, ash utilization, and development of outlets for ash trees. This section outlines potential programs the District could implement and includes questions for the Policy Committee to discuss.

Public Education

OSU Extension, Ohio Department of Agriculture, and Ohio Department of Natural Resources – Division of Forestry are conducting Emerald Ash Borer education. These groups have developed fact sheets, publications, posters, and bumper stickers that help educate the public and tree companies.

Potential District Involvement

The District could assist with localized outreach given our close relationship to Hamilton County political jurisdictions and local media. Attachment A is a condensed outline of the education campaign the District could undertake to:

- Provide general Emerald Ash Borer education to homeowners and communities,
- Discourage the movement of firewood, and
- Assist homeowners in locating a certified arborist.

The District would only spend funds on mailing costs if the Policy Committee chooses to implement the outreach plan. Staff will use information and materials provided by OSU Extension, Ohio Department of Agriculture, and Ohio Department of Natural Resources – Division of Forestry.

Questions for Discussion

- Although very little District funds will be used to develop the education campaign (i.e., mailing costs), should staff time be spent implementing this campaign given that it is not focused on waste reduction or recycling? There is concern that this does not fall under the allowable uses for District funds.
- Should the District be involved with general outreach, given the number of organizations that are already providing this service?

Consumer Protection

There have been instances in Hamilton County where unscrupulous individuals took advantage of homeowners by telling the homeowner they had an ash tree that needed to be removed because of the Emerald Ash Borer when, in fact, the tree wasn't even an ash tree. There is concern that this practice may happen more frequently with the recent quarantine.

Options to protect homeowners include disseminating information on how to locate an arborist that is ISA-certified (International Society of Arboriculture); encourage municipalities to pass fraud or tree care ordinances; and possibly involve state legislators.

Options for District Involvement

The District's public education plan includes outreach to homeowners on how to locate an arborist. It is recommended that Hamilton County include information on their website that lists local ISA-certified arborists and encourages residents to check for liability and worker's compensation insurance.

District staff could research other municipalities throughout the State to determine if they have passed fraud or tree care ordinances and offer this information to local political jurisdictions that are concerned about this issue.

It is not known if other municipalities in Ohio have passed ordinances in response to the Emerald Ash Borer. However, if fraudulent behavior is statewide, it might prove beneficial to involve the state legislators.

Questions for Discussion

- Although no District funds will be used, should staff time be spent researching fraud and tree care ordinances given that it is not focused on waste reduction or recycling?
- Should the District contact the state legislators or would it be more beneficial for the Board of County Commissioners to convey this concern?

Managing Wood Waste

Although the quantity of ash trees is not known, it is estimated that one out of every ten trees in Ohio is ash. The taskforce discussed several options for District assistance including: purchasing a tub grinder, assisting communities with jointly contracting for tub grinding services, sawmilling, and developing outlets for ash.

Options for District Involvement

Tub Grinding Services

Amongst the taskforce, there was consensus that the District should not purchase a tub grinder. A better option for the District is to help communities jointly contract for tub grinding services provided by the private sector. Ideally, by jointly contracting, communities can reduce the cost of this service. In a recent survey conducted by the District and Cincinnati Park Board, 19 of the 25 communities that responded stated they are interested in joint contracting. It is possible that the District could work with Hamilton County's Shared Services committee to move this option forward.

Sawmill Operation

The taskforce is interested in finding the highest and best use for ash trees. A sawmill operation may be the best way to achieve this goal. There are many issues and questions surrounding this option such as:

- Staging areas will need to be secured for ash trees that are taken down by communities and the private sector.
- How will the material be transported to the staging areas?
- Determine how to dry the material.
- Determine how to store the material.
- What is the best way to saw the material?
- What type of sawmill will meet our demands – portable or static?
- If portable sawmills are pursued, how many are needed?
- Who will purchase the finished product? How can the markets for ash be developed?
- Should the sawmill operation be operated by the private or public sector, or a combination of both?

Staff is recommending the formation of a small committee to answer these questions and develop a plan that addresses these issues. The committee would consist of representatives from OSU Extension, Cincinnati Park Board, OSU – Dept. of Natural Resources, USDA Forest Service, and local sawmill operators.

Developing Markets for Ash

In order to pursue higher and better uses for ash trees, a market needs to be developed for ash. Although a very hard wood, ash is not as widely used as other wood such as oak and maple. Typically, ash is used for making handles. Ash should not be used outdoors unless heavily

treated; therefore, any market development should focus on interior uses such as cabinets, banisters, etc.

There are mill operations in southwest Ohio and major furniture producers in Ohio and Indiana that could be an outlet. Unfortunately, most of the mills will not accept urban wood because of contaminants such as nails, metal, and concrete. Staff and taskforce members are attempting to contact these operations to determine what needs to happen for the urban ash trees to be acceptable and meet their needs.

There is a need to raise awareness of the value of ash amongst the building industry. The taskforce discussed ways to develop outlets and provide incentives for ash, such as requiring all public projects to have at least 1 percent local wood.

As with the sawmill operation, Staff is recommending that the same committee develop ways to overcome the obstacles associated with marketing urban ash trees.

Summary

There are several ways the District can help alleviate the impacts of the Emerald Ash Borer. Some options can be implemented quickly such as the outreach plan, others, such as organizing a sawmill operation and developing outlets for ash, will take more time and study.

Specific ways the District can help include conducting local outreach to political jurisdictions and residents providing general information to homeowners, discouraging the movement of firewood to slow the spread, and informing residents on how to locate a certified arborist. The District would use publications already produced by OSU Extension, Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources, and the Ohio Dept. of Agriculture. District resources, such as staff time and mailing costs, would be used to achieve this goal. There is concern that this does not fall under the allowable uses for District funds.

Although there was consensus that the District should not purchase a tub grinder, the District can assist political jurisdictions by helping them jointly contract for tub grinding services. Staff could work through Hamilton County Shared Services Committee to accomplish this goal.

Finally, District staff is recommending the formation of a small committee of tree experts and sawmill operators. This committee will further investigate and develop a solid plan for finding a higher and better use for ash trees. The plan could include marketing ash trees to private sector outlets (aside from chipping the material), options for sawmilling, end markets for milled lumber, and increasing awareness on the uses of ash to the building industry.

ATTACHMENT A - EAB Public Education/Outreach Campaign

Overview

The purpose of the Solid Waste Management District's public education/outreach campaign is to educate the residents of Hamilton County about EAB. Specifically, the campaign will focus on the following three topics:

- **Firewood** – Don't move it (even within the county)
- **General EAB Education** – What is EAB, how to identify Ash Trees, recognizing signs of EAB infestation
- **How to handle Ash Trees** – Hiring a certified arborist

The campaign will be executed by District staff through a variety of general awareness and education activities, as well as, through media relations activities. The District will not be creating any new materials to disseminate to the public, but will use those materials already produced by the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) and the Ohio State University (OSU) Extension Office.

General Education/Outreach Activities

To help educate residents on the three EAB topics listed above, District staff will conduct the following activities:

- Display outreach materials (posters, etc.) at Hamilton County buildings
- Send a letter and fact sheets/brochures to all Hamilton County communities' administration buildings (will provide additional copies for distribution at these locations as requested)
- Provide all Hamilton County libraries with EAB literature
- Contact local hardware stores and, if approved, place EAB literature at registers for customers
- Work with the Hamilton County Park District to provide EAB literature to residents who rent park pavilions, obtain permission to camp, etc.
- Create an EAB page on the District's and Hamilton County's main website that links to the information available from the ODA and OSU
- Contact all local environmental organizations to offer them EAB information for distribution to their members, mailing lists, etc.
- Include information about EAB in various District publications and newsletters

Media Relations Activities

District staff will conduct a variety of media relations activities to promote education and awareness of EAB in Hamilton County, including:

- Send articles on the three subject areas to all local community newsletters and community press papers
- Send press releases on the three main subject areas to all local media outlets including print, TV and radio
- Promote the availability of the Public Service Announcement (PSA) created by the ODA regarding EAB and firewood to local cable and TV stations