NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry
271 Mast Rd, Durham NH 03824
Phone: 603-868-7600; Fax: 603-868-7604; Web Site: http://www.na.fs.fed.us/

Date: May 5, 2011 Release No. DFO-03-11
Contact: Glenn Rosenholm phone (603) 868-7686 E-mail: grosenholm@fs.fed.us

Forest health specialists converge on eastern NY for huge EAB survey

KINGSTON, N.Y.—The nation's largest single emerald ash borer delimitation survey is currently underway in eastern New York.

Forest health managers are closely examining trees for signs of this exotic forest pest across a roughly 225 square-mile area. They are trying to determine the extent of a large infestation near Kingston. Surveyors are checking ash trees for evidence of EAB life stages within the bark and wood underneath.

EAB (*Agrilus planipennis*) is a highly invasive, exotic wood-boring beetle capable of killing healthy ash trees in as little as three to four years. The wood borer, a native of Asia, has killed tens of millions of ash trees across 15 states and two Canadian provinces so far. It was first detected in the Detroit area in 2002.

The New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation is leading the survey effort, assisted by forest health personnel from at least 12 other federal and state agencies across the region. Personnel from as far away as Maine have taken part in the operation.

The known area of infestation has apparent EAB-infested trees spanning several miles. Forest health managers want to rigorously survey for EAB two or three miles beyond the known edge of the infestation to determine its exact dimensions.

Regulatory officials first detected the established EAB population in the Hudson River Valley last July. The infestation, estimated to be five to seven years old, is the easternmost EAB detection in the United States to-date. It is about 25 miles from the Connecticut state line and New England.

The infestation's size, scale and nearness to New England woodlands and urban forests have caused great concern in the Northeast. It also bodes ill for the region's ash trees.

This easternmost infestation is a satellite population of the approaching EAB invasion front that extends across a broad swath of the eastern United States. The population in eastern New York State is far removed from the main EAB population centered in the southern Great Lakes region. It is about 150-170 miles east from the nearest known EAB infestations, located in western New York and central Pennsylvania. Forest health managers suspect it was probably moved there by people hauling infested

firewood or logs. Natural spread of EAB is much more gradual, about two to three miles per year initially.

"New York State is the main battleground in the fight against EAB," said New York State Forester Robert K. Davies. "Our efforts and those of our colleagues in the US Forest Service and the forestry agencies of the New England states are helping us to rapidly detect and respond to the EAB infestation."

He added, "This multi-agency and multi-state effort underscores the vital importance of applying cutting edge strategies and using every tool in our tool box to protect forest health." Davies also serves as the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Division of Lands and Forests Director.

The survey operation has been ongoing since February; it is expected to be completed in May.

Nathan Siegert, a forest entomologist with the US Forest Service Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry, is leading the survey effort on scene. His primary job is technical advisor for the delimitation survey and management operation.

He said the relatively recent infestation is spread out more than would be expected. "It is surprisingly diffuse with no clear epicenter. Most early infestations have a more defined point of origin with a succession of EAB-killed or declining trees radiating out from that point."

The primary goal of the survey is to determine the extent and distribution of the EAB infestation in the Hudson River Valley, added Siegert. The survey will also gather EAB population density data. After the survey is complete, forest health managers will decide what kind of management approach to take.

"Effective management of this infestation will help to reduce EAB population density and disrupt the spread of the tree-killing pest. This is particularly important for communities and urban areas in eastern New York and New England, where the greatest economic damage will occur," said Siegert. "However, a survey must first be conducted to find out how far the infestation already extends."

Siegert said without management at the Kingston site, EAB would likely enter New England forests naturally in the next few years.

Several measures can be taken to potentially reduce the growth of the insect's population and possibly disrupt its natural spread, he said. "We can target removal of the largest ash trees in the infested area, as larger trees produce more adult beetles. Insecticide treatment may be an option for high value ash trees in urban areas. Efforts to establish biological control agents can take place. Additionally, since stressed ash trees are particularly attractive to dispersing EAB adults, small clusters of ash trees can be girdled to serve as population sinks." Girdling ash trees helps to draw EAB toward certain spots and away from other areas.

-END-

On the Net: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9ca86FuVuE

http://www.emeraldashborer.info/