



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 26, 2010

Release No. DFO-03-10

Contact: Glenn Rosenholm

phone (603) 868-7686

E-mail: grosenholm@fs.fed.us

Officials surveying campgrounds for forest pests

DURHAM, N.H.— Federal and state officials have visited more than more than 200 campgrounds and second homes across the Northeast, looking for signs of harmful forest pests.

Forest health managers examined trees on 218 federal and state campgrounds along with second homes in New England and New York in 2009. Thousands of trees have been studied to date. Search efforts will continue in 2010.

The forest health initiative is part of the Forest Pest Outreach and Survey Project, a multi-agency cooperative effort. Eighteen federal and state forestry and agricultural agencies from Maine to Pennsylvania, along with the Nature Conservancy, are participating. The project is supported by the U.S. Forest Service and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Eastern Region.

As the name implies, the program is divided into outreach and survey activities. The outreach part includes public presentations, workshops, brochure handouts and other public communications.

The group has been searching forests at federal and state campgrounds and vacation homes in the Northeast for signs of the emerald ash borer and Asian longhorned beetle. EAB and ALB are invasive insect species native to Asia. The two insects were introduced to North America years earlier, and have since been deemed major threats to domestic forests.

The EAB targets ash trees and is a widespread problem in the United States. It spreads rapidly on its own, in addition to being spread by human-aided firewood movement. EAB has already destroyed millions of ash trees in the Midwest and mid-Atlantic regions and continues to spread.

The ALB has been mainly found infesting trees in urban areas, but poses a significant threat to the forests of the Northeast. This is because it infests and harms a wide variety of hardwood species, including maples, birches, elms and willows. Maples range widely across Eastern North America and are highly preferred hosts for the insect.

The forest health managers are using campground registrations and other records to conduct ZIP code-based searches targeting possible infestation areas. Officials also reached out to private campground owners in recent months to search for forest pests in trees. Some voluntary second homeowner tree inspections were also completed in New Hampshire and Vermont.

Campgrounds and second homes are being targeted because they tend to have insect-laden firewood on hand. Firewood is a known pathway for the artificial movement of wood-infesting insects, some of which can be extremely harmful to native forests. Also, an earlier study showed

a large number of people from ZIP-codes with known infestations visited campgrounds far away. Often they would haul their own firewood.

While the surveys have not detected any new EAB or ALB infestations so far, moving firewood still poses a very real threat to forests, say experts.

“There are hundreds of people who have second homes in New Hampshire that move firewood,” said Kyle Lombard, a State of New Hampshire forest entomologist.

He said people often ask what they can do to reduce the possibility of moving insects in firewood. “A study we did last year showed a wide variety of insects emerged from firewood. Every single piece of firewood with bark had insects emerge from them,” he added Effective heat treatment can kill off insects in firewood, but most firewood is not heat treated. By far, the best way to ensure no insects are moved is to leave your firewood at home and purchase local firewood at your recreational destination.

.Anyone who suspects they might have an ALB or EAB infestation should quickly contact the appropriate state forestry or agricultural authorities.

“It is important that the public look for and report possible sightings and leave their firewood at home,” said Patty Douglass with APHIS. Douglass is the APHIS State Plant Health Director for Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Emerald Ash Borer Awareness Week is May 23-29 and coincides with the Memorial holiday weekend, when many people go camping and spend time outdoors.

ALB Awareness Month takes place in August, when the adult beetles have emerged and are active on the trees.

On the Net: www.dontmovefirewood.org

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