

Emerald Ash Borer University

EAB University Webinars Deliver Quality Information for Little Cost

The Challenge

The emerald ash borer (EAB) was discovered near Detroit, MI, in the fall of 2002. Since then, EAB has spread to 13 States in the East and Midwest, and is closing in on other States quickly. This insect has killed tens of millions of ash trees.

As EAB discoveries increase in both number and geographical extent in North America, it becomes even more critical that pertinent, timely information is available for the many audiences affected by EAB. Traditionally, this has involved face-to-face meetings, educational conferences, press conferences, Extension programs, and other events.

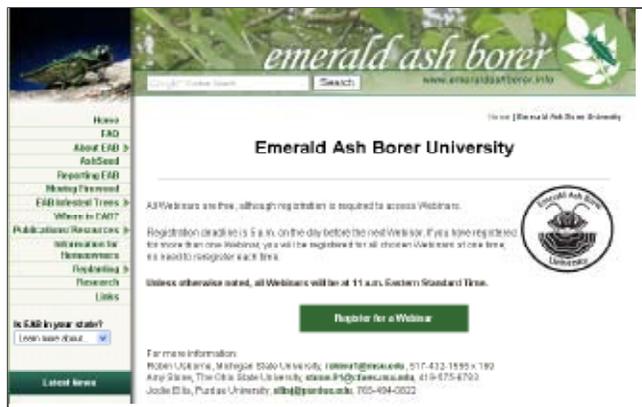
Although these communication vehicles work well, they are often time and labor intensive. Those involved must spend money on travel, accommodations, and meals.

The Solution

EAB educators from three universities—Michigan State University, Purdue University, and The Ohio State University—approached the U.S. Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry, about helping them use an innovative format to spread EAB information to a much larger and broader audience. Their proposal—the EAB University—uses free Webinars to deliver EAB information easily and inexpensively with a minimum of travel and expense to participants.

The Forest Service agreed to award a grant to fund this virtual institution. Northeastern Area Forest Health Protection staff worked closely with the organizers to create a 2-year curriculum. The Webinars became a success from the beginning—more than 100 people registered for the first Webinar. The lessons are also posted online for those who may have missed them. Both presenters and participants can take part in the Webinar from anywhere in the world where high-speed Internet access is available.

NA provided funding and development support for the EAB University, a series of free Webinars that provide timely, up-to-date information about the emerald ash borer.



The EAB University offers free Webinars to anyone with high-speed access to the Internet.

Participants can download and view presentation materials during the Webinar, or make comments and ask questions, either verbally or by typing questions or responses using the webinar's chat feature.

Resulting Benefits

More than 100 people signed up for the first EAB University Webinar, "Introduction to EAB," held on November 5, 2009. Since then, three other classes have had a total of 348 registrants. Participants have come from many States in the U.S. as well as Canada.

- The EAB University brings timely, accurate, and consistent information to a broad spectrum of individuals concerned about the EAB but who, due to time constraints, limited budgets, and uncertainty about where to find a concentrated source of high-quality material, would otherwise not be reached.
- In the near future, live sessions will need to be added to accommodate the large numbers of registered participants.
- Since the EAB University is inherently flexible, curricula could be added to meet the specific needs of a variety of groups. This format can serve as a template for other forest health issues where risk communication and learning are key factors in detecting and managing pests.
- Classes will be offered throughout 2010. To register for future Webinars or to view previous classes, visit http://www.emeraldashborer.info/eab_university.cfm.



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