

THIRD ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

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An Unwelcome Tourist Moves In

PREPARE TO KISS YOUR ASH GOODBYE

By Tom Ryan, DCR Service Forester



In your travels throughout Berkshire County last summer, you may have seen purple box-shaped objects hanging in the trees. They are still there and will be around a lot longer. They are insect traps designed to detect the presence of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), an invasive insect pest that is native to Asia.

Those odd traps worked. Unfortunately. Now we know that EAB is in Berkshire County, unwelcome news for our ash trees (genus *Fraxinus*).

EAB was first detected in Michigan in early 2002 and has since spread like an ash

wildfire to a total of 18 states (so far). The State Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) announced the most recent EAB spotting was last August in the central Berkshire town of Dalton. The trapping of this single beetle triggered an intensive survey of the surrounding area to determine the size and degree of the infestation and resulted in a state and federal quarantine of Berkshire County that was imposed on March 1 this year.

It is now illegal to transport any ash products out of the quarantined Berkshire county unless under special permit. As of May 1 this year, the state of New York is slated to expand its quarantine to encompass all abutting counties with Massachusetts. There is, however, free movement of the so-called regulated articles within the quarantine area. Regulated articles include the following: any part of an ash tree from leaf tip to root tip including any ash logs, lumber or nursery stock, all hardwood firewood

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The Country Store

Public Meeting April 8

By Simon Winchester

With a growing sense of urgency about our town's need for a new general store, the Sandisfield Selectmen have scheduled a required public hearing to consider the matter. It will be held on Monday April 8th at 8 p.m. in the Town Hall Annex, and officials have asked that as many townsfolk as possible try to attend.

The meeting is specifically called to discuss the recent application by Connie D'Andrea for a so-called Special Permit – allowing her to add to the current bar and restaurant license that allows her to run her existing SilverBrook Café, new licenses for “the Operation of Grocery license, Frozen Food Retail License, a Bakery License, & an Operation of Antique-Craft/Gift Shop.”

It may take weeks for the various separate approvals to come through, if at all. But Ms. D'Andrea is confident that all will be settled later this summer, and that she will then be able both to remodel the existing building at No. 57, Sandisfield Road, and rename it The SilverBrook Cafe and Country Store.

She has recently formally told her immediate neighbors of her plans – under regulations that require all the unhappily-termed ‘abutters’ to be informed of changes of use to any existing nearby business. The strength and tone of their views – which will presumably be presented vocally at the public hearing – will be crucial to the town's decision on whether to allow her the special permit, and thus set the town en route to getting the kind of new store and coffee shop that this burgeoning community believes it now so dearly needs. ♡

“There is no substitute for a local newspaper that is doing its job.”

-- Warren Buffett, New York Times, March 2, 2013

Unwelcome Tourist

Cont'd from p.1

(defined as any piece of hardwood less than 48 inches in length), and any life stage of the EAB insect.

Regulated articles may legally leave the quarantine only under strict adherence to an official compliance-agreement-permitting process developed by APHIS and DCR. That agreement stipulates what kind of approved sanitizing treatment or process must be utilized in the movement of regulated articles.



In plain English, to remove regulated ash product from the quarantine zone the wood must first be fumigated, kiln-dried, heat-treated, and/or have the bark and ½ inch of wood removed. Chipping is an acceptable treatment if wood chips measure less than one-inch square. The justification for the quarantine and the special treatments is to effectively sanitize the ash material and help slow the spread of this invasive insect.

Locally, some of the biggest impacts of this quarantine will be the restrictions placed on the movement of split firewood; all hardwood firewood less than 48 inches in length regardless of species (maple, birch, ash, oak etc) is considered regulated and cannot legally leave the quarantine. Sandisfield is on the edge of the current quarantine boundary, and this could impact many of our neighbors in town who have established split-firewood businesses.

Currently there are only two legal options to deliver firewood to clients living in towns outside the quarantine, even as close as Tolland and Blandford in Hampden County and Winsted, Colebrook, and Norfolk in Connecticut. The two options are to either adopt a certified heat-treatment process or move firewood in log-length form (with, of course, no ash on the load!).

The heat-treatment certification is an expensive process, which very few dealers in the state have opted to employ and currently none are located in Berkshire County. The movement of log-length (over 48 inches in length) non-ash

firewood is an option in Massachusetts but not the case if transporting wood to Connecticut. Connecticut has adopted a firewood policy that essentially restricts the movement of any wood intended to be used for heating purposes.

Although there may be some consolation for small businesses in the news that the EAB quarantine boundaries have expanded annually after each summer's trapping/detection season, this is something we hope to avoid by stopping the ash borer from spreading by use of the quarantine and awareness education.

Unfortunately, this little green juggernaut has evaded multiple eradication attempts in other states and regions. Subsequently, the quarantine is designed to slow the spread of this insect. The quarantine effort provides hope to contain the bug and prevent the unnecessary spread of EAB through our ash population. The root cause of the rapid expansion from Michigan is believed to be the human transport of this pest on infested ash wood. Awareness education is designed to prevent human-caused insect dispersal. Studies show EAB can naturally fly about a half mile from an infested tree but prefers to stay local, attacking trees in close proximity. In Asia where this insect is native the pest is actually not a problem with Asian ash trees and studies are currently under way to develop control strategies here in the states. The gradually expanding quarantines are designed to provide communities not already infested with EAB a greater opportunity to develop control measures to keep this pest in check.

The unfortunate reality is that this insect has the potential to affect ash trees on the magnitude that elm trees were affected by the Dutch elm disease and chestnut trees were affected by the chestnut blight. That said; don't take this as an obi-tree-ary. Spread the word to help slow or halt the infestation. The good news is that at this time surveys conducted in Dalton indicate a very low-level of infestation.

In my next article I will discuss ways that we can prepare for the Emerald Ash Borer should we start experiencing widespread ash mortality. ♡

Questions? Contact the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Forest Health Program at 413-253-1798 ext 204 or me at 413-784-1828 ext 123 or tom.ryan@state.ma.us

What the Quarantine Means

The quarantine order means that certain wood products will be regulated from moving outside the regulated area, including all hardwood firewood (any piece of wood smaller than 48"), all ash nursery stock, and any ash lumber that has not been treated. Proper wood treatments include the removal of bark and half an inch of wood, dry kiln sterilization, fumigation, and heat treatments.

It is allowable, however, to move wood from quarantined county to another quarantined county, which should relieve some of the financial pressure on the wood industry in Berkshire County. The state of New York recently added 22 new counties to their EAB quarantine, including counties that abut the Berkshire County border. This will allow the moving of regulated wood from Massachusetts to the mills that are just over the border in New York.

Plans for future surveys are currently being discussed and EAB traps will be utilized again this summer in Massachusetts, as well as the girdling of approximately 100 ash trees to continue to help narrow the infestation. ♡