Emerald Ash Borer Update

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was first found in 2002 in Michigan. The only literature available at that time was two papers from China. By comparison Dutch Elm Disease was found in the 1930s and reached Minneapolis in the 1960's, which provided 30 years of research compared to about six for EAB.

The impact on Minnesota will be extensive because there are 900 million ash trees, second only to Maine (more than Ohio and Wisconsin combined). Eventually they will all die.

Symptoms of infested trees include a thinning or dying crown, suckering on the trunk or at the base and woodpecker damage. Woodpeckers have been the most helpful indicator; the tiny D-shaped exit holes are not helpful.

ST. PAUL INFESTATION

After the initial find in St. Paul in May, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture set out to determine the extent of the infestation beyond the initial discovery area (east of Hwy. 280 and north on University Ave.). Over 200 grids have been laid out on a two-mile radius from the initial find, which extends into Minneapolis.

The St. Paul infestation is believed to have been present for four years; it can take that long for the population to increase enough to get the attention of the woodpeckers.

There are currently 67 confirmed trees, all in St. Paul. The confirmed trees were removed in early June to eliminate them prior to adult beetle emergence, which is early June to October. MPRB assisted by providing a chipper and chipper truck.

There are 15 suspected trees in Minneapolis at this time.

CONTROL MEASURES

During the next few weeks, MPRB will provide "trap trees" for the MDA. These trees are sacrificed to see if EAB is present. MPRB has been involved in this partnership for several years.

MDA will place large purple sticky traps, about the size of a small kite, throughout the Twin Cities to act as lures for flying beetles. Some of these traps are likely to be placed in Minneapolis.

Eradication is no longer looked upon as a control measure. Of 500,000 trees removed by APHIS (animal and plant health inspection service) only one site may have been successful.

The most likely management strategy to emerge is to slow the spread of the infestation so that losses can be distributed over time. This avoids the problem of removing many trees within a few years. The use of insecticides is not designed to preserve trees, but to delay losses so that removal costs are spread over time.

As more is learned about chemical treatments, an approach will be developed to hopefully slow the spread of EAB and determine costs associated with management strategies. There currently are no funds budgeted for chemically treating ash trees.

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