

Woodland Health

A column focusing on topics that might limit the health, vigor and productivity of our private or public woodlands

COORDINATED BY MARK WHITMORE

AN UPDATE ON EMERALD ASH BORER IN NEW YORK STATE

BY MARK WHITMORE

It's been a while since I've written about the emerald ash borer (EAB), *Agrilus planipennis*, in this column and the number of questions I've been getting are unabated so I figured it was about time for a bit of a refresher. As some of you who are in the midst of countless numbers of dead trees know probably all too well, EAB has not gone away. Perhaps others are wondering what all the fuss is about since there is no evidence of it being near. Let me reassure the latter that EAB will be in your back yard probably sometime soon, and to the former, well, you've my sympathy and I hope you will pass your

stories along because New York will be dealing with dead ash trees in increasing numbers for likely the next couple of decades and the impacts will be lessened the better informed we are.

First of all, I'll address detection. I often get emails about someone's pet tree in the yard that is dying. My first question is what do other ash in the area look like? EAB will not attack just one tree, all the ash in an infested area will have similar symptoms: woodpecking on the bole and canopy thinning are the most reliable. If you think you have just one suspicious "D" shaped exit hole on a tree it is not EAB, there will be many, very many.

The best symptom to recognize is woodpecking, or blanding, on the bole of the tree. This can best be seen in late winter when the bole is wet. As the woodpeckers forage for EAB they fleck off the outer portion of the bark that is dull gray exposing bright brown color beneath (Figure 1). This can easily be seen from a distance and is the single most important symptom used by NYSDEC when delimiting an infestation. When you look at the DEC map (Figure 2) there is an inner core of an infestation and this is basically a dot to dot connection of woodpecking on the periphery detected by the DEC survey crew. Within this area there are many acres that are asymptomatic and this may be confusing but it makes sense if you consider that EAB are vigorous fliers and that there are likely a few individuals programmed to disperse long distances to start another satellite infestation. I encourage anyone with an interest to visit the heart of one of these infestations so you are aware of the symptoms and can be your own gauge of how far EAB is away from your property.



Figure 1. Woodpecker foraging for EAB on ash causing blanding. Photo by Mark Whitmore.

This is important for timing of logging operations and for treating trees to keep them alive. The insecticides with Eemamectin benzoate are definitely the most effective but I recommend treating before you begin to see symptoms. If you see symptoms in trees a couple miles away from your place it is time to treat.

If you are considering logging your woodlot ahead of EAB you've got some important decisions to make, and quick. First of all, is it worth it to take the ash out of your stand? Consider the value of other species in the stand and the cost of stand entry. Will a stand entry for the ash be premature for more valuable species that you might need to sell to pay for the job? Think about the potential damage to the more valuable growing stock. If you have a stand that is heavy to ash you might want to consider taking them out in multiple entries to allow regeneration to establish with minimal competition from invasive species that might take over with large canopy openings. Of course you will also need to consider the availability of the foresters and loggers you would want to do the job, they will be busy when EAB comes to town.

Perhaps the most important aspect of owning a woodlot from my point of view is the possibility that you might find a tree or two that have survived EAB. These trees may be resistant and be the savior of the species. I can't state strongly enough the need to pay attention and alert someone if you think you have a survivor, or "lingering ash" as the US Forest Service project is referring to them in the mid-west. It will take much time and resources to determine if they are really resistant and begin propagation but the sooner the better and NY is at the heart of white ash distribution.

There are two bills being introduced by Senator Timothy Kennedy that may be of interest to those considering the EAB predicament. Senate bill 8196-A is written to give a tax credit to landowners for removal of ash trees killed by the emerald ash Borer or treatment to keep them alive. The bill will allow a tax credit for 50% of the cost of tree removal up to \$300 per tree, and also allows a tax credit for 50% of treatment costs up to \$100 per tree. There is no limit to the number of trees removed or treated, but all trees claimed in the tax

**Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)
Quarantine Boundaries**
Binghamton, Hudson Valley, Montezuma, Nichols,
Rome, Syracuse, Unadilla, Western Region

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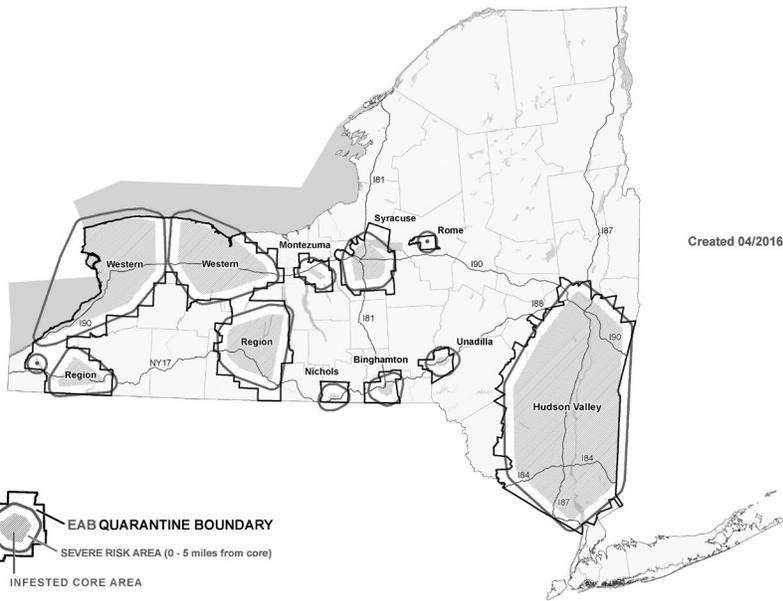


Figure 2. 2016 NY state EAB quarantine boundaries with infested core areas. Map created by NYSDEC forest health.

credit must first be inspected by an arborist or forester which could be difficult to schedule considering the potential demand for their services. A useful provision is a carryover of the credit for five years. One concern for woodlot owners, and for forest biologists interested in preserving the genetics of ash species for the long-term, is that the bill is intended for residential or mixed use properties within the state that are used by the owner as a primary residence, secondary residence, or rental. I think it would be good if the bill stated unambiguously that woodlots were acceptable for treatment so we can encourage those who wish to preserve the genetic diversity of ash species. In addition, it would be good to increase the amount of treatment credit to \$200 so larger trees can be included. This bill is still in the formative stages so contacting senator Kennedy's legislative counsel Rick Rogers (*rrogers@nysenate.gov*) may be effective.

The other, Senate bill 8197, deals with the health of an urban forest through promotion of biodiversity of plantings and although not directly applicable to woodlots owners, should be of general interest to those concerned with forest health. The

bill states: "When a municipality, parks department, highway department, or other local entity undertakes a tree planting project in public locations, they shall select and plant biologically diverse types of trees. To satisfy sufficient biodiversity, the municipality shall follow the 10-20-30 principle when the municipality is planting new trees or replanting in an area. The 10-20-30 principle states that a tree population shall include no more than ten percent of any one species, twenty percent of any one genus, or thirty percent of any one family. This percentage shall be measured by the tree population as a whole, not by any one planting project solely." This concept has been widely practiced by professional urban foresters for years. Although the proportions may be impossible to attain in your woodlot I think it is always good to consider biodiversity to increase resilience in any forest. 🌲

Mark Whitmore is a forest entomologist in the Cornell University Department of Natural Resources and the chair of the NY Forest Health Advisory Council.

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