

EAB Ribbon Campaign Launch, July 16, 2015

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is considered to be one of the worst invasive alien forest pests to ever be introduced to North America. EAB has killed or infested as many as 100 million ash trees since it was first detected in 2002 in the Windsor-Detroit area. An estimated 10 billion ash trees in Canada and the US are at risk of infestation and death. In Canada, it is estimated that the cost of management will be \$2 billion.

Communities and regions that have been infested by EAB have experienced significant losses of benefits and services after the eradication of ash trees from their rural and urban forests.

Trees provide a multitude of benefits including the cooling of our homes and cities, and the reduction of air pollution and stormwater runoff. Research shows that trees can reduce violent crime, and that tree-lined streets can reduce the speed of traffic. And there are economic benefits in energy savings for houses – mature trees can reduce your heating and cooling costs by about 15 per cent, and can increase housing value by around \$20,000.

A recent study published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine revealed a surprising connection between human health and loss of tree cover due to EAB. Researchers looked at data from 15 states and determined that mortality rates due to cardiovascular and lower-respiratory-tract illness increased with increasing tree loss. Across the study area, the borer was associated with an additional 6113 deaths related to illness of the lower respiratory system, and 15,080 cardiovascular-related deaths. The study concluded that that loss of trees to the emerald ash borer increased human mortality related to cardiovascular and

lower-respiratory-tract illness. This finding adds to the growing evidence that the natural environment provides major public health benefits.

First Nations communities value black ash for traditional products such as baskets, snowshoes, canoes, oars and other items of commercial and cultural importance.

In Thunder Bay, we stand to lose over 25% of our street trees or about 6400 ash trees. Our Urban Forest Management Plan reported that they provide about \$400,000 worth of benefits annually to our community. If EAB arrives in Thunder Bay and if we chose to manage by simply removing and replacing those trees, it will cost us approximately \$6.7 million.

This year, the EAB Ribbon Campaign is being launched by the EAB Task Force for Northwestern Ontario with funding generously donated by the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation. Our Task Force was formed in 2011 with a mission to prevent the spread of EAB into NWO. However, if it is introduced, to slow the spread of EAB in all NWO forests, including the urban trees in our community.

The Task Force is comprised of a variety of individuals that represent all levels of government – municipal, provincial and federal- as well as the business sector, organizations such as the TB Field Naturalists, TB Master Gardeners, and Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Hydro One, the Ontario Invasive Species Centre, Lakehead University, Confederation College, Independent First Nations Alliance and interested citizens.

We have worked diligently to increase awareness of the threat of EAB and what can be done to prevent its arrival. Right now, EAB is as close to us as Sault Ste.

Marie to the east and Superior Wisconsin to the south. It is getting dreadfully close to our region and we hope that by launching our ribbon campaign, we will be able to catch the eyes and ears of more people in Thunder Bay and region. By placing ribbons on actual ash trees, people will be able to visualize that EAB will kill “this tree right here”. They will be able to see the impact that this pest will have on entire blocks lined with ash trees.

There are three main messages that we want to spread and they are: Don’t Move Firewood, Educate Yourself and Protect This Tree. The “Don’t Move Firewood” message is to teach people that EAB larvae live unseen under the bark of trees and by moving ash firewood, they may be inadvertently bringing this hitchhiker from an infested area to a non-infested area.

The “Educate Yourself” message is to encourage people to do research on EAB and that an excellent site to begin this investigation is at invasiveinsects.ca. This is a recently launched Canadian site that provides a wealth of information for homeowners, landowners and municipalities.

The message “Protect this Tree” provides management options such as the use of insecticides to help keep trees safe. Information regarding them can be found at the website identified on the ribbons.

This year, we are very happy to have volunteers offering to put up ribbons for us from several groups, including; local TD bank employees, MNR Youth Stewardship Rangers, the EarthCare Community Greening Working Group, and EAB Task Force members. Their valued assistance will help spread the word about the threat of EAB and what we can do about it.

In closing, thank you for coming out today to help us initiate our EAB Ribbon Campaign and assisting in trying to prevent the arrival of this devastating pest or at least slow its spread into Northwestern Ontario.