



News Release

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DESTRUCTIVE TREE PEST DETECTED IN GEORGIA

An invasive insect responsible for the death or decline of tens of millions of ash trees in 20 states has been detected in Georgia for the first time. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, suspect emerald ash borer beetles were removed from survey traps during routine monitoring in DeKalb and Fulton counties in July. Federal officials confirmed the specimens as emerald ash borers days later, setting in motion plans to prevent its spread and educate the public.

The Georgia Invasive Species Task force is working to execute the plan. This group consists of the Georgia Department of Agriculture, Georgia Forestry Commission, University of Georgia, Georgia Department of Natural Resources and USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

“Forestry specialists have been monitoring the emerald ash borer for more than a decade, and have been surveying for the pest since 2005,” said Robert Farris, Georgia Forestry Commission Director. “We’ll need the public’s help in stopping it from spreading further.”

According to Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black, emerald ash borers “are hitch-hikers.” Black said emerald ash borer larvae live underneath the bark of ash firewood, hidden from view. People unknowingly give the pest a ride when they move emerald ash borer firewood between counties or from home to campsite. “Everyone can help by spreading the message, ‘Don’t move firewood,’” he said.

Farris explained that while only one percent of Georgia’s forested acres contain ash trees, the potential destruction is significant. Some three million ash trees are in urban environments



and another two million acres are in rural settings. Losses generated to the forest industry and the public could reach \$1 billion.

Because of known occurrences, DeKalb and Fulton counties are proposed to be quarantined to prevent potentially infested ash wood from spreading outside this area. The Georgia Forestry Commission and Georgia Department of Agriculture are developing regulations in an effort to quell the spread of emerald ash borers. These rules are in draft form now and will be available for public comment soon. Both agencies will work with forest landowners, loggers, firewood producers, nurseries, municipalities and others to insure that commerce can still occur while safeguards are in place to prevent ash borer movement.

The emerald ash borer (EAB) is a small, green metallic beetle first detected in North America in 2002 in southeastern Michigan. The emerald ash borer attacks only ash trees and all ash species – including green, white, black and blue – are at risk. Signs of emerald ash borer infestation include a general decline in the appearance of the tree, thinning of upper branches and twigs, loss of leaves, and serpentine tunnels produced by EAB larvae under the bark. Woodpeckers may often be observed removing the bark of infested trees to access the larvae.

For more information, including identification tips for landowners who suspect the presence of emerald ash borers or other invasive species on their property, visit www.gainvasives.org/eab. For more information about emerald ash borers and the proposed quarantine for DeKalb and Fulton counties, visit <http://www.gatrees.org/forest-management/forest-health/alerts-and-updates/index.cfm>.

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