

Marietta Cite Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan March 2007

The Emerald Ash Borer Problem

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is caused by an exotic, invasive insect that was inadvertently transported to the United States and which infests and kills ash trees. While natural predators of EAB include fungi, bacteria, wasps and woodpeckers, none of these have to date been effective in stopping the spread. There is no treatment currently available for this infestation, and while annual systemic treatment of ash trees with certain insecticides can prevent infestation, this is not a feasible municipal control strategy due to the number of trees that will be impacted. Observations indicate that all infested ash trees die from EAB, sometimes in as little as one year. Consequently, it is feared that EAB is likely to wipe out all ash trees in Ohio.

The timetable of arrival of EAB in our area is uncertain. While the outbreak originated in southeastern Michigan, spread into Ohio was first documented in 2003 and since then has progressed steadily southward into the state. Its presence has been recently been documented in Miami County, although not yet confirmed in Washington County. If movement is confined to natural means, it may not arrive in the southeastern Ohio for about a decade. However, since transport in infected nursery stock and firewood continues to be serious artificial mechanisms of spread, it could arrive in the Marietta area at almost any time.

The City's computer inventory currently lists about 200 ash trees in the City Tree Inventory, although there are other ashes in some un-inventoried parks and natural areas. The consequence for Marietta of an EAB outbreak will be the need to remove all ash trees. This document describes the EAB Management Plan through which Marietta will strategically begin to remove ash trees before the arrival of the EAB, and thereby minimize the costs of ash tree removal and replacement.

There are also many ash trees on private property that residents of Marietta will need to remove, and by implementing this plan the City is demonstrating the need for everyone to plan for the eventual impacts of EAB in our area. Failure to plan for EAB arrival will leave many residents with unplanned expense and hazardous dead trees on private property. The Tree Commission will help to educate the public on this matter and identify ash trees on private property.

Marietta City EAB Management Plan

This plan presupposes that the EAB will not enter the Marietta area for approximately 10 years, i.e., until approximately 2016. The plan may need to be modified should the predicted or actuality of EAB arrival in this area be sooner or later. City trees have been subdivided into four groups according to tree size, and removal of trees within each group will be scheduled according to tree size so as to minimize the cost to the city, as described below. Ash trees currently in the inventory and those in non-inventoried areas will be re-inspected during the next couple of years to update inventory data.

Group 1: Trees with a current trunk diameter of 2 – 4 inches. These trees will not be removed until shortly before the EAB reaches this area. They are currently quite small, and the cost of their removal is not expected to increase for some time; for many years they could be removed at no cost by City crews or members of the Tree Commission.

Group 2: Trees with a current trunk diameter of 5 – 7 inches. These trees are likely to increase in size quite rapidly over the next few years; and eventually their size will necessitate removal by contract. To avoid this cost, their removal will be carried out by City crews or Tree Commission

members sometime after 2010, depending on the status of EAB spread, and special appropriations for their replacement would be requested.

Group 3: Trees with a current trunk diameter of 8 – 12 inches. Approximately, 15% these trees will be removed each year beginning in 2007. They are currently of a size that allows removal by City crews or Tree Commission members, but which may grow rapidly to a size necessitating removal by a contractor, and city will save significant expense by beginning to remove these trees now. Residents will be notified of the planned action, and removals will be dispersed through the city to lessen impact on neighborhoods, aesthetics and property values. Requests from residents will be honored when possible. This includes residents who request removal of trees as well as those who request that ashes be retained in expectation that protective insecticidal treatments, approved by the Tree Commission, will be paid for by the resident.

Group 4: Trees with a current trunk diameter greater than 12 inches. These large trees require removal under contract now or later, but since their rate of growth is slower, this cost will not increase significantly (inflation notwithstanding). These trees will be removed using the funds accumulated in the EAB Tree Removal Fund, beginning at some time after 2011, as dictated by the rate of spread of the EAB. Depending on the status of this fund when tree removal begins, the City may need to appropriate significantly greater funds for ash tree removal at that time.

Ash trees in natural areas: Ash trees in “natural areas” on river banks, Kroger Wetland, Kris-Mar, etc. will only be removed only if they pose a threat to trails or other human use zones.

Replacement trees

As in other communities confronted with the need to remove ash trees due to the EAB, planting new trees will be important to helping residents accept the need for tree removal and to help maintain the overall health of the city’s urban forest. Thus, the city will invest in replacement trees as the EAB plan unfolds in future years. New trees will be of diverse species, selected for suitability to individual sites.

Funding

Two budget lines have been created as part of the EAB Management Plan, one for tree removal costs and one for planting of new trees. Monies in these funds will be allowed to accumulate, and the planned appropriations for these funds are described below.

EAB Tree Replacement Fund. Appropriations of \$2900 will be made in 2007, 2008, and 2009 to plant new trees in sites where Group 3 ash trees are removed by City crews or the Tree Commission. Anticipating the planting of about 15 trees each year, at \$190 per tree, the funds would also cover the cost of stump removal. Future appropriation will be made as necessitated by the rate of spread of the EAB.

EAB Tree Removal Fund. \$5000 will be placed into an EAB Tree removal Fund in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. This money would accumulate and would be used for removal of ‘Group 4’ trees when it is deemed necessary depending on the rate of spread of the EAB. It is expected that removal of these large trees will begin before the EAB reaches the city. Recommendations as to future appropriations will be made in 2011.