



News Release

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EAB Found in Tennessee – What Does This Mean for Georgia?

A destructive, exotic insect that attacks and kills ash trees, has been discovered near Knoxville, Tennessee. Because the emerald ash borer (EAB) pest is federally-regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a mandatory quarantine has been implemented in the area. The quarantine prohibits the movement of ash firewood, logs, seedlings, or any ash wood product.

“If this destructive insect reaches our state boundaries, Georgia stands to lose a significant ash resource,” explains GFC’s Chief of Forest Management James Johnson. “While no EAB have been discovered in Georgia yet, this Tennessee find is too close for comfort.”

White and green ash are the most common ash species found in Georgia. White ash is established in moist upland and lowland forests in the mountains and piedmont, and is a valuable timber tree used for furniture, veneer, interior finish, baseball bats, railroad ties, tool handles and fuel. Green ash is found throughout the state, but mostly in lowland areas. While its wood is considered inferior to the white ash because it is more brittle and less resilient, green ash is used for some of the same purposes as white ash. Carolina ash, pumpkin ash and blue ash are also found in Georgia but are much less common. All species of North American ash appear to be susceptible to EAB. Georgia has ash trees growing on approximately 1.35 million acres of forest land, with an estimated stumpage value of \$364 million. About 2.9 million ash trees are found in Georgia’s urban and community forests and have a value of \$725 million.

“The Georgia Forestry Commission and other cooperators currently have around 120 EAB traps to detect the pest scattered throughout the state, and similar trappings has been conducted for the past four years,” says Johnson. “Movement of infested firewood is one way EAB is spread. The GFC has worked closely with state parks to help educate visitors about the very real dangers of moving forest pests via firewood.”

There are several signs to look for when identifying EAB. Adult beetles are metallic green and about one-half inch long. The larvae are segmented and creamy white in color and feed inside the tree between the wood and bark. Woodpeckers like to feed on EAB larvae, so heavy woodpecker damage on ash trees may be a sign of an infestation. Once the larvae mature into adults, they chew their way out of the tree, leaving “D” shaped exit holes in the bark. Tree canopy dieback will begin in the top third of the tree and continue until the tree is completely dead. Depending on the level of infestation, tree death usually occurs within three to four years for larger trees. Additional information can be found at <http://www.emeraldashborer.info/>.

Detecting this problem early is critical to the health of your trees as well as the health of Georgia's 24 million acres of forest land. If you suspect EAB has infested trees in Georgia, contact your local Georgia Forestry Commission office or call 1-800-GATREES.