

DNR Cautions Campers To Avoid Spreading Invasive Tree Diseases in UP

By Paul Gingras

A ban on transporting any part of the ash tree into the Upper Peninsula remains in effect this year, and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is also asking campers not to move American beech logs. Both species can be infected with insects that destroy tree stands, which harms forest aesthetics, development of wood products, recreation areas, and ecosystems. Owing to these and several other wood-borne pests, the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) is encouraging campers to use local wood where they stay, and to consume it completely. Unused wood should be left on site or returned, but not transported.

DNR project leader Robert Heyd, who specializes in pest management, said the ban on transporting firewood across the Mackinac Bridge has been remarkably effective in stopping the spread of emerald ash borers, voracious beetles that destroy ash trees.

"In the past two years, we have confiscated 650 cubic yards of firewood" at the Mackinac Bridge, said John Hill, supervisor for MDA. In the past, the wood was shipped to Gaylord and burned to produce electricity. Now, it is donated to Fort Michilimackinac in Mackinaw City, where it is burned as part of historical reenactments, said Jim Bowles, also of the MDA.

A survey conducted on the bridge during deer hunting season last November revealed that 91 percent of people crossing were aware of the state's effort to eradicate the emerald ash borer, which Mr. Hill calls "a great improvement." Protecting the U.P. has become one of the department's top priorities.

The flow of firewood over the bridge has steadily decreased, highlighting a change in Michigan tradition. Prior to the

onset of the ash borer, transporting wood from downstate to northern camps was a common practice, Mr. Hill explained, but the campaign against them has highlighted dangers to trees, and the public is changing its habits.

Jereme Huss inspects wood at St. Ignace Welcome Center for the MDA, which keeps an inspector on site 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Logging trucks and travelers with campfire wood are referred to him by bridge staff, said Mr. Huss, who has been involved the MDA's effort to eradicate the ash borer

"Protecting the U.P. has become one of the [MDA's] top priorities."

John Hill
Supervisor,
State Dept. of Agriculture

since 2003. Most wood is confiscated on site, he explained. If it slips through, the MDA, in association with local courts, can fine anyone who ignores the quarantine. Fines range from \$100 to \$10,000, depending on specific charges, according to the Michigan State Police.

Mr. Huss agreed that transporting ash wood has dropped significantly since the state imposed a quarantine in 2002. The quarantine now covers the entire Lower Peninsula. Ash borers are especially prevalent in southeast Michigan, with smaller pockets of ash borers found elsewhere in the Lower Peninsula, particularly at state parks and campgrounds. Most likely, these were caused by imported campfire wood, he said.

Over the years, the details of the quarantine have changed, Mr. Huss said. Not only is it illegal to transport ash north over the Mackinac bridge, all other species of hardwood are restrict-

ed from the U.P., unless they have been stripped of their bark and half an inch of inner wood. Kiln dried or fumigated hardwood is allowed, but few campers use this, Mr. Huss said.

Moving firewood from one location to another is a bad policy for forests in general. Insects that attack ash and beech wood are only two dangers that can be spread by campers. Fungal infections like oak wilt, a disease that rapidly kills oak trees, is also a problem. In the U.P., this disease is found in Menominee and Dickinson counties.

There are new problems on the horizon, also, such as the European sirenix wood wasp, which appeared on the east coast in 2004. The wasp is moving through New York, Pennsylvania, and southern Ontario, carrying a fungus that kills conifers like the native red pine.

As the weather warms and campers make their way into the Upper Peninsula, foresters are asking them to think about these dangers, especially the emerald ash borer, which has destroyed millions of trees throughout the Midwest, and beech scale, a tiny European insect that kills beech trees.

The DNR estimates that the ash borer has killed between 20 and 25 million trees, Mr. Heyd said. The only known infestation in the U.P. was found near Brimley two years ago. The area was quarantined and 430 ash trees were destroyed, and there have been no problems since. The quarantine will probably be lifted there next year, Mr. Heyd said.

Residents who remain unaware of the problem, or continue to transport firewood, are an ongoing challenge for the effort, he added.

It can be impossible to tell if an ash tree is infected. Adult beetles attack the top of a tree first



An ash tree infested with emerald ash borers tries to compensate for the death of its canopy by producing new branches at the base. The ash borer usually attacks the top of a tree first. (Photograph courtesy of the Michigan Department of Agriculture)

and lay their eggs in the bark. Logs from lower portions of infected trees, which appear healthy, have been cut and transported.

Sometimes, the bark of a severely infected tree will split, and larva, called a gallery, can be seen beneath, Mr. Heyd said. The trees generally die from the top down.

The loss of ash trees is primarily an urban phenomenon in the Lower Peninsula, but beech bark disease is moving eastward across the Upper Peninsula. It is prevalent throughout Luce County, and it is also found in western Chippewa, Mackinac, and Schoolcraft counties.

State quarantines on beech wood not been effective, and there are no quarantines in place

now, Mr. Heyd said. The disease spreads by moving firewood, wildlife, and wind, and can be slowed by leaving infected wood where it is.

"Be responsible," Mr. Heyd said. "If a [beech] tree dies, don't just cut it down and move the logs to camp."

The minute insects that cause beech bark disease are called scale. They enable Nectria fungus to enter, weaken, and eventually kill the trees. Scale infestations look like cotton on the tree's bark, and heavily infected stands appear whitewashed. Beech scale is active in the mid-summer months, Mr. Heyd said.

Scale weakens beech trees, causing them to snap and fall.

Beech bark disease has nearly eliminated the American beech

from eastern forests, and Mr. Heyd said the species will become scarce in Michigan, however, foresters have discovered resistant strains and hope to reestablish the species. Between one and three of each 100 trees in infected areas are resistant to scale.

"The resistance is very real," Mr. Heyd said. The DNR is protecting such trees and learning about their resistance.

"It's a long-term project, but a good one," he said.

Resistant strains of American beech are being studied at a laboratory in Delaware, Ohio, operated by the federal Forest Service. There, researchers produce seeds, graft resistant trees, and test them against scale, Mr. Heyd said.

LC Schools Grapple With Budget Deficit

Thirty-five students will be graduated this May from Cedarville High School, but only 19 students will enter kindergarten this fall, a 16-student decline in enrollment.

The numbers are evidence of an enrollment trend that has plagued the Les Cheneaux Community Schools district for more than a decade. While Clark Township's population has increased in the last decade, there are fewer residents with children, and fewer children in families. When each student brings the school \$7,525 in state funding, a 16-student drop means a \$120,400 cut in revenue, the cost of two or three school jobs.

Michigan's declining enrollment provision allows districts like Les Cheneaux to average student enrollment over three years to reduce the impact of sharp enrollment declines.

Superintendent Rod Goehmann announced the numbers at an April 16 Board of Education meeting, where trustees and an audience of nearly 30 people hashed out the meaning of next year's looming budget deficit. The board considered laying off teachers, and ultimately decided against it. At an earlier meeting, they considered contracting custodial services to save money, but have yet to decide on that. As the board gets closer to adopting next year's budget, it faces a \$171,000 deficit and only \$40,000 in the fund balance.

In the past, a healthy fund balance of more than \$200,000 each year provided a way to balance the budget without making deep cuts.

"We're fast reaching a point where our fund equity is not going to be available anymore," Superintendent Rod Goehmann told the board.

School employees at the meeting questioned the wisdom of state lawmakers, who plan to reduce school funding \$90 to \$150 per pupil this summer to help balance the state budget.

Governor Jennifer Granholm alerted schools Monday, April 30, that the funds could be cut as much as \$125 by June 1 if the Legislature can find other ways to balance the state budget by then.

School funding has increased during the past two years, although administrators say the increases have not kept pace with skyrocketing health insurance and retirement benefit costs, which are negotiated in teacher contracts at the local level. Nevertheless, several residents suggested that Lansing lawmakers need to "wake up" and fix the problem.

"I have to point out to the board

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NMU Video To Help Abused Women

Professors Seek To Dispel Excuse That Alcohol Is Factor in Domestic Abuse

By Ryan Schlehuder

Alcohol abuse or intoxication should not be accepted as an excuse by women who are abused by men, say two Northern Michigan University (NMU) professors, who are interviewing 40 abused women for an information video to be distributed to all domestic violence shelters and substance abuse facilities in Michigan.

"Alcohol should not be accepted as an excuse or reason to abuse someone," said Ira Hutchison, head of the Department of Sociology and Social Work. "There are several kinds of abuse cases, however, we are focusing on the biggest problem, men hitting women. There are certainly other forms of abuses that are just as serious, however, women don't terrorize men like men terrorize women."

Dr. Hutchison and Kerri Schuiling, associate dean of nursing, will interview 40 volunteer women who have been abused, and pull out common themes.

"Many women say, 'If he'd only stop drinking, he wouldn't hit me so much,' but the thing is, they also hit them when they're sober," he noted.

The 45-minute video will be based on interviews with the women about their experiences.

"It will, as far as I can tell, be the first video to focus on something applied to alcohol and violence," Dr. Hutchison said, "and we will have a product that will help treatment centers and medical facilities."

More women are beginning to speak out these days, said Dr. Schuiling, who chairs the board of a new women's shelter in Marquette.

"The wrong people have been hiding," she said, although she believes things are progressively changing for the better.

"The opening of our new women's shelter in Marquette is

widely known, where before, [such a thing] was kept secret for the privacy of the abused women," she said.

The video will also be useful to nurses, said Dr. Schuiling.

"Nursing education pays attention to some domestic abuse education, but it is contained as part of a lecture," she said. "The video will be very poignant for nurses because it will be the survivors talking."

Nurses, she said, are usually the first to discover a patient has been abused, and they have the best opportunity to establish a therapeutic relationship with abused female patients. Listening to women speaking out about their experiences on the video may help nurses find better ways to approach patients about their experiences, about which they may feel embarrassed or frightened.

"We have women who come in and say they've been abused, but never report who abused them," said Tamie Hartwig, director of nursing for acute care at Mackinac Straits Hospital. "Many times they pay their examination bill in cash instead of by credit card, so there is no record their abuser can trace back to them."

The important message that will be relayed through the video, said Dr. Schuiling, is that abuse is not the fault of the victim.

The project is being funded with a \$78,000 grant from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Michigan.

Construction of Clark Township's Recreation Pavilion Begins



Todd Reid (on tractor) and Ken Bailey begin work on the new Clark Township Recreation Park pavilion in Cedarville Monday, April 30. They raised the frame for the 30-foot by 40-foot, open-sided building behind Clark Township Hall, to the west. The pavilion was donated by McMaken Carpentry of Cedarville, and is the first facility to be built in the new park. Ball diamonds and a well are expected to follow this summer.