

Emerald ash borer numbers increasing in Credit River watershed

Emerald ash borers (EAB) are becoming increasingly present within the Credit River watershed.

Over the summer, Credit Valley Conservation (CVC), with funding from Peel Region, deployed 44 traps in the central and northern areas of the watershed to track the spread of EAB. CVC confirmed 17 sites with EAB.

Insect traps were set up at locations from northern Mississauga through to Orangeville. The majority of traps were installed on CVC-owned land or municipal park land, while eight were set up on private properties.

Many landowners with ash trees on their properties don't yet know about the extent of the EAB threat, said CVC Forester Zoltan Kovacs. Learning about EAB is the first step in dealing with it. Landowners actually have a number of options available to them, from treating ash trees to replanting.

The monitoring program revealed EAB in a number of CVC-owned conservation areas, including Ken Whillans Resource Management Area, Silver Creek Conservation Area and Meadowvale Conservation Area. Based on current levels of infestation, CVC ecologists project that EAB will be present throughout much of the watershed by 2015.

EAB is an invasive insect, meaning it is not native to this region. It has devastating effects on native plants and animals. Originally from Asia, EAB is spreading throughout southern Ontario, including the Credit River watershed, killing North American ash trees. EAB larvae (young) feed just beneath the bark of ash trees and disrupt the movement of water and nutrients. This pest continues to spread north through Ontario by flying from ash tree to ash tree. The rapid, large-scale spread of EAB, however, is facilitated by transporting firewood, nursery stock and logs. EAB has already killed millions of trees but early detection can slow its spread and damage.

CVC has worked with its partners to monitor the spread of EAB throughout the Credit River watershed. By 2009, EAB was detected in the urban southern areas of the watershed, including Mississauga, Brampton and Oakville. During the summer, CVC detected the beetle's presence in the middle and northern portions of the watershed.

Due to the large presence of EAB, CVC has discontinued large scale monitoring and is now shifting its focus to EAB management activities. CVC is developing specific management plans for each of its properties. Each plan will take into consideration the property's recreational usage, ecological value, ash tree density and opportunities for ash tree preservation. CVC's goal is to mitigate the effects of EAB on its properties while maintaining visitor safety and preserving the important ecological function of these natural areas as much as possible.

Residents play a significant role in helping control EAB by not moving firewood and monitoring ash trees for evidence of EAB activity.

For more information on how to identify the signs and symptoms of EAB, visit CVC's website at www.creditvalleyca.ca/eab

