

City of Richland Center
Richland County, Wisconsin
Emerald Ash Borer Status and Management Plan

(Add Appendix of Zones)

The presence of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) in the City of Richland Center was confirmed by the WI Department of Natural Resources in 2017. This confirmation moved the City beyond the initial steps delineated in its “Emerald Ash Borer Readiness Plan” (June 10, 2013 by Bluestem Forestry Consulting, Inc.) and into active management of infested trees.

When the City’s “Readiness Plan” was developed, 464 publicly owned street trees were ash. Since then, a number of ash trees have been removed by the City for a variety of reasons. However, as the digital tree inventory has not been up-dated, this management plan uses the tree locations and numbers provided in the earlier document.

A driving tour of the City during the second week of 2018 indicated that ash trees in diverse areas of the municipality were probably infested with EAB. This observation aligns with a DNR scientist’s statement in 2017 that EAB had probably been in the City for several years. Assuming an initial infestation in 2015 and applying an invasion wave model based on the spread of EAB in other Midwestern cities, one can assume that all the City’s untreated ash trees will be infected by 2023.

The City made a decision, whether formal or informal, not to treat the majority of its ash trees for EAB. The “Readiness Plan” proposed biennial treatments (a reasonable interval for the time of its writing) starting with half the City’s trees one year and the remaining half the next year. The estimated annual cost for treatment by a licensed contractor was \$75,000. None of the City’s employees have the training and certification to conduct the recommended treatments. With the most effective chemicals available now, ash trees would need to be treated at least every third year. Individual trees would have to be treated every two or three years until the presence of untreated ash trees became so negligible that EAB virtually disappeared from the area. As small ash trees in surrounding natural areas grew to a size that would support the reproductive life cycle of EAB, the pest would likely move back into the area and treatments would need to be resumed. Thus, based purely on the financial costs of management and disregarding the diverse values trees contribute, the decision to treat only twelve public trees is understandable.

The “Readiness Plan” made several recommendations for proactive measures that apparently were not completed. (For instance, the Plan stated “Ordinances relating to forestry need revisions prior to an EAB infestation.” If the ordinances have not been reviewed, it is appropriate for that step to be completed at this time.) The result of a “do nothing until EAB arrives” approach is that the time and fiscal costs of addressing the problem become concentrated. Activities that might have been scheduled may need to be completed on short notice to minimize dangerous conditions. Community support that

might have been developed over a period of educational outreach may be difficult to garner once trees are being removed.

Parks & Grounds Foreman Dave Fry has been designated as the EAB Project Leader. As recommended in the “Readiness Plan”, he has planned for utilization of wood from cut ash trees. Rockbridge Sawmill has agreed to purchase logs meeting their specifications. Wood over three inches in diameter but not suitable for sawlogs will be set aside and made available as firewood. Wood less than 3 inches in diameter will be chipped by City employees and used by the City as mulch.

Areas for wood storage have been identified. Sawlogs will be staged in the tennis court parking lot until they are picked up by Rockbridge Sawmill. Limbs and small trees destined to become firewood tentatively will be staged on the public side of the landfill gate. Woodchips will be stockpiled at the landfill until needed by the City crews in the summer.

Four geographic zones for ash tree removal have been identified. These areas are identified in Appendix A. Each year, Fry will determine ash trees outside that year’s removal zone that should be cut to alleviate a public hazard. Hazard trees will be prioritized for removal regardless of location. Otherwise, tree removals will be take place in one Zone per year to confine periods of disturbance in public areas and neighborhoods. Zones hold roughly the same number of ash trees to distribute the removal work load. Zones with lots of high public use areas (Krouskop Park) are scheduled for completion before zones with lower use (the cemeteries).

The “Readiness Plan” estimated costs for removing trees and planting replacement trees (pages 12 and 13). Failure to budget realistically for ash removals could result in increased liability if rapidly deteriorating trees are left standing or the need to shift funds from other scheduled programs. After up-dating for current public employee wages, the “Readiness Plan’s” estimated costs could be used to project budget needs for the next three years.

Some options are available for reducing the local taxpayer’s cost of EAB management.

- Replacement trees could be purchased bare-root (rather than balled and burlapped) and a gravel bed could be constructed to hold that stock during the period required to get them planted.
- Evergreen trees (pines, spruce, tamarack, etc.) tend to be less expensive than hardwoods and they would be suitable as replacement trees in some parks settings.
- Complete as much work in-house as possible. If contractors must be hired to safely fell some trees, public employees may be able to handle the debris removal once the tree is on the ground. Decisions such as this must be made prior to soliciting bids from contractors.
- When contracting for services, use a sealed bid process. Award the contact(s) to the lowest bidder(s) able to meet your requirements.
- You could apply for DNR Urban Forestry grants each year.

- If eligible for American Transmission Company grants, those funds can be used to purchase planting stock.

The EAB infestation in Richland Center will require much more planning and physical work. What follows is a schedule of important activities that can guide the City's EAB work. The Parks & Grounds Foreman will not be able to complete all these tasks with his regular crew unless significant reductions are made to their current responsibilities. Cooperation between municipal departments will be necessary. Local residents/organizations with interest and talents to take on some of the tasks may be identified and put to good use.

January - March 2018

- **Employee, Tree Board and Municipal Leader Education:** Determine where important knowledge and training gaps exist among these groups. The knowledge needed to make good EAB policy decisions differs from the knowledge needed to handle the on-the-ground EAB response. Find ways to provide people with the information and skills they need. Informational websites are identified on page 15 of the "Preparedness Plan". Good basic information is available through EAB University which offers free webinars. Links to past webinars can be found on the DNR Urban Forestry web page. This same page also provides links to recorded US Forest Service training sessions, some of which relate to EAB. DNR Urban Forestry Coordinator Brian Wahl can inform the City of other training options that arise. This spring, the Village of Gays Mills will host a one-day "Hazard Tree Identification" class which might be useful to Fry or his crew if they haven't received such training already.
- **Public Outreach:** Immediately begin to inform the public about EAB, its impact on community trees, and steps the City will be taking to address the problem. Page 14 in the City's "Readiness Plan" identifies appropriate topics to be addressed in your outreach efforts. The local newspaper, radio station, and City web-site are good places to start the educational process. Some communities find that posters placed on public bulletin boards reach residents who might not otherwise hear your message. Brian Wahl, DNR Urban Forestry Coordinator may be able to provide sample press releases about EAB that could be adapted for the City's use.
- **Wood Utilization:** Determine how firewood will be processed (by public works crews or private citizens) and disposed of (given away or sold—if the latter, what will the price be, and how will sales be managed). Purchasers of firewood must be notified that they cannot move firewood out of the EAB quarantine area. If wood cannot be fully utilized as planned, try to identify different disposal or use options by working with other area municipalities or Wisconsin Urban Wood.
- **Tree Planting:** Identify where replacement trees will be planted in spring 2018. Fry already plans to replace up-town boulevard trees removed in 2108. Select appropriate species/cultivars for replacements and order planting stock. Public outreach regarding tree planting should inform people that the City will not be planting a replacement for every tree removed. For instance, trees that currently

do not meet the ordinance requirement for distance from an intersection or trees that are currently too close together will not be replaced.

- **Tree Removal Prep:** Identify and mark hazard ash trees that will be removed outside the scheduled removal zone. Communicate the need for removal of those individual hazard trees with adjacent landowners via phone calls, press releases, door hangers, or other method. Notify the public about removals in this year's removal zone.
- **Remove Trees:** The "Preparedness Plan" states "removals greater than 12" diameter will need to be contracted". If that will be the case, contractors will have to be hired to remove a good proportion of the ash trees. Contractual removals tend to be costly. If the Parks and Recreation crew, working with the utility and street crews, can remove larger trees safely (even if that requires that they get additional training) the City will probably save money. Remove as many scheduled trees as possible while the ground is frozen to minimize damage.
- **Treat Trees:** Identify and contract with a certified arborist for treatment of the twelve ash trees in the Park. This may be done in conjunction with/assistance from the Village of Gays Mills which also plans to treat an ash tree. Follow the "Preparedness Plan's" recommendation to treat with Tree-age™ (Emamectin benzoate) via the Arborjet delivery system. You may want to request the Rotary Club to contribute to the cost of treating trees as those ash are being retained for their role in the Festival of Lights.

April – June 2018

- **Plant Trees:** Plant replacement trees, mulch them and begin watering as needed.
- **Evaluate Costs:** Analyze tree removal costs to assist with developing budget for the next three years. If necessary, removal operations could be extended over a slightly longer period of time if hazard trees are removed in a timely fashion.
- **Adopt a Tree:** Decide if you have the staff resources to develop, advertise and implement an "Adopt a Tree" program where individuals or groups can fund the purchase of a replacement public tree. Unless volunteers will coordinate this effort, it will be important to keep the process simple (no permanent marker by planted trees, etc.) Tree species selection should take into account the current genus and species distribution in the City and strive for further species diversity.
- **Grind Stumps:** Grind stumps of park trees and boulevard trees cut this year.

July – September 2018

- **Seek DNR Funds:** Consider applying for a DNR Urban Forestry grant to cover 50% of the costs of some aspects of your forestry program. Grant applications are typically due by October 1st. Preparing an application takes some time so begin well in advance of that date.
- **Seek ATC Funds:** Determine if American Transmission Company has lines that run through the City. If so, consider applying for a grant to cover the cost of purchasing planting stock. This application is generally due by September 30th. It is much simpler to prepare than a DNR grant; but, you will need to know what species of trees will be planted where to write the grant.

October – December 2018

- **Budget:** Prepare a budget request for EAB activities in 2019. Remember and take into account that the number of removals, and the difficulty of removals, may be greater than in 2018.
- **Removals:** Continue with tree removals scheduled for the year. If not seeking a DNR grant, get as much of a start on scheduled 2019 removals as time and weather conditions allow.

January - March 2019

- **Public Outreach:** Continue with public outreach. Feedback to elected officials and City employees will probably let you know what forestry issues concern residents.
- **Wood Utilization:** Evaluate the prior year's firewood disposal procedures. Modify if necessary then continue.
- **Tree Planting:** Identify where replacement trees will be planted in spring 2019. Select appropriate species/cultivars for replacements and order planting stock.
- **Tree Removal Prep:** See 2018 activity description.
- **Remove Trees:** Remove as many scheduled trees as possible while the ground is frozen to minimize damage.

April – June 2019

- **Plant Trees:** Plant replacement trees, mulch them and begin watering as needed.
- **Monitor Costs:** Monitor costs to determine if there are significant changes in costs from prior year. As needed, make plans to adjust budget request.
- **Adopt a Tree:** If this program is working for you, continue with it. Otherwise, make adjustments or abandon the effort.
- **Grind Stumps:** Grind stumps of park trees and boulevard trees cut this year.

July – September 2019

- **Seek DNR Funds:** See 2018 activity description.
- **Seek ATC Funds:** See 2018 activity description.

October – December 2019

- **Budget:** Prepare a budget request for EAB activities in 2020.
- **Removals:** Continue with tree removals scheduled for the year. If not seeking a DNR grant, get as much of a start on scheduled 2020 removals as time and weather conditions allow.

January - March 2020

- **Public Outreach:** Continue with public outreach. Feedback to elected officials and City employees will probably let you know what forestry issues concern residents.
- **Wood Utilization:** Evaluate the prior year's firewood disposal procedures. Modify if necessary then continue.

- **Tree Planting:** Identify where replacement trees will be planted in spring 2020. Select appropriate species/cultivars for replacements and order planting stock.
- **Tree Removal Prep:** See 2018 activity description.
- **Remove Trees:** Remove as many scheduled trees as possible while the ground is frozen to minimize damage.

April – June 2020

- **Plant Trees:** Plant replacement trees, mulch them and begin watering as needed.
- **Monitor Costs:** Monitor costs to determine if there are significant changes in costs from prior year. As needed, make plans to adjust budget request.
- **Adopt a Tree:** If this program is working for you, continue with it. Otherwise, make adjustments or abandon the effort.
- **Grind Stumps:** Grind stumps of park trees and boulevard trees cut this year.

July – September 2020

- **Seek DNR Funds:** See 2018 activity description.
- **Seek ATC Funds:** See 2018 activity description.

October – December 2020

- **Budget:** Prepare a budget request for EAB activities in 2021.
- **Removals:** Continue with tree removals scheduled for the year. If not seeking a DNR grant, get as much of a start on scheduled 2021 removals as time and weather conditions allow.

January - March 2021

- **Public Outreach:** Continue with public outreach. Feedback to elected officials and City employees will probably let you know what forestry issues concern residents.
- **Wood Utilization:** Evaluate the prior year's firewood disposal procedures. Modify if necessary.
- **Tree Planting:** Identify where replacement trees will be planted in spring 2021. Select appropriate species/cultivars for replacements and order planting stock.
- **Tree Removal Prep:** See 2018 activity description.
- **Remove Trees:** Remove as many scheduled trees as possible while the ground is frozen to minimize damage.

April – June 2021

- **Plant Trees:** Plant replacement trees, mulch them and begin watering as needed.
- **Monitor Costs:** Monitor costs to determine if there are significant changes in costs from prior year. As needed, make plans to adjust budget request.
- **Adopt a Tree:** If this program is working for you, continue with it. Otherwise, make adjustments or abandon the effort.
- **Stump Grinding:** Stump grinding in the cemetery should be completed as funds and crew time allow. Otherwise, follow standard stump-grinding protocol.

July – September 2021

- **Seek DNR Funds:** See 2018 activity description if you want to apply for funds to assist with planting more replacement trees or conducting other urban forestry projects.
- **Seek ATC Funds:** See 2018 activity description if you want to do tree planting in 2022.

October – December 2021

- **Removals:** Continue with tree removals scheduled for the year.

Appendix A
Zone Delineation

Zone 1