

Questions and Answers: Additional Information About the Ohio Cooperative Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) Eradication Program

This document addresses questions received by the eradication program during the months of November and December. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is committed to sharing information about the ALB program and working closely with residents.

Q. How widespread is the ALB infestation within Clermont County, and where can I find information on the location of infested trees?

A. There are 56 square miles under regulation for ALB within Clermont County, which includes all of Tate Township and a portion of Monroe Township. For the most up to date information on the location of infested trees and the extent of the infestation, please visit the ALB program office, Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m., located at 1761-A State Route 125, Amelia, OH, or call the program at (513) 381-7180. Maps reflecting current program information can also be found online at: www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/asian_lhb/alb_maps.shtml.

Q. What is the difference between an “Environmental Assessment (EA),” an “Environmental Impact Statement (EIS),” and a “Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)”?

A. First, all Federal agencies must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) before making final decisions about actions that could have environmental effects. Each of these documents provides citizens and community leaders an opportunity to learn about and be involved in the agency's decisionmaking process. For example, conducting an EA is a mechanism by which a determination can be made about the potential for significant impacts resulting from proposed actions. The purpose of an

EA is also to look at alternative means to achieve the agency's objectives. An EIS is prepared if significant impacts are likely, and if an agency is proposing a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. A FONSI is a document that presents the reasons why the agency has concluded that there are no significant environmental impacts projected to occur upon implementation of the action. You can learn more about these three different documents by referencing a guide issued by The Council on Environmental Quality of the Executive Office of the President, entitled “A Citizen's Guide to the National Environmental Policy Act: Having Your Voice Heard,” which is available online at: http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/Citizens_Guide_Dec07.pdf.

Q. Why is a second EA needed when an initial EA was issued in July 2011?

A. APHIS based the initial EA and its proposed course of action on the knowledge that there were only approximately 800 infested trees. However, as the assessment surveys ended and delimiting surveys began, the number of known infested trees increased quickly. The size and scope of the infestation is now much broader than originally determined, and a second EA is being prepared based on new information. It will include proposed courses of action for the current regulated area, including the impact of removing infested and high-risk host trees, as removing high-risk host trees was not proposed in the initial EA.

Q. When will the second EA be issued and available for public comment?

A. We want to thoroughly examine the specific situation and impact of the various options in Ohio; therefore, the second EA is not expected to be available for public comment until the spring of 2012. We welcome and encourage those interested to provide comments when the EA is published. It is important to understand that commenting on either an assessment or statement is not a “vote” on whether the proposed action should take place. However, the substantive information received through the comment period is carefully reviewed and considered and can influence the decisionmakers and their final decisions.

Q. When issuing the second EA, will you be analyzing the impact of alternative actions besides just high-risk host removals?

A. Yes. APHIS organized a Technical Working Group that includes representation from Ohio's scientific community to analyze various alternative actions,

taking into account the proposals already presented by residents. Once completed, APHIS will provide the Technical Working Group's analysis to the community and evaluate the alternative actions as part of the EA process.

Q. What other organizations will be consulted through the second EA process?

A. APHIS will consult with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA), Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), Ohio State University (OSU), Clermont County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). APHIS will also carefully review and consider comments received from other organizations or persons through the open comment period.

Q. What was the letter mailed to Bethel, OH, property owners on October 31, 2011?

A. The letter sent to residents affected by the first phase of removal operations for ALB-infested trees is a legal notice from ODA, as required by Ohio Revised Code—Section 927.70. The letter reflects an eradication proposal agreed upon by ODA and APHIS. The letter mentioned the removal of infested trees and high-risk host trees, which is the approach that provides the most effective eradication of ALB. Currently the program is only removing infested trees.

Q. As a property owner, can I ask for proof that the trees marked as infested are actually infested before they are removed?

A. Yes. The ALB program will work with homeowners requesting proof that trees designated for removal are in fact infested by ALB.

Q. What is the projected percentage of trees to be removed as part of the initial removal phase?

A. First, please note that only infested trees are currently being removed. As of December 19, 2011, there were 4,725 known infested trees within the phase one removal area of 860 acres; this is 7.83 percent of this area's total host trees. However, the program is currently resurveying host trees on properties that were previously identified as not infested and continuing to detect infested trees within this 860 acre area. Also as of December 19, 2011, an additional 295 infested trees had been detected outside the 860-acre phase one removal area, which will require removal.

Q. Is the program still surveying trees?

A. Yes. Surveying trees for signs of ALB is a continual process and takes place year round. ALB program staff is continually resurveying host trees previously identified as not infested, as they mark infested trees for removal.

Q. Will there be a second removal phase? And if so, what are the plans?

A. Yes. As of December 19, 2011, 1,136 infested trees had been removed from the phase one area. There are still many infested trees to be removed from this area. APHIS and ODA are working together to determine where the next phase of removals will occur. All impacted landowners will receive a legal notice letter from the ODA prior to the initiation of removal operations on their properties. The program will continue to work with landowners prior to removal operations taking place. If you have questions, please contact the program directly at (513) 381-7180.

Q. How will the health of non-host trees be protected during the removal process? And will property owners be compensated if non-host trees are lost during removals?

A. APHIS stipulated in the removal contract with Young's General Contracting Inc., that the contractor must be diligent in protecting non-host trees during the removal process. If there is collateral damage to non-host trees and property as a result of the ALB removal process, APHIS and the contractor will work with the property owner to resolve it. Property owners are asked to communicate any concerns with APHIS by calling (513) 381-7180 and/or the contractor by calling (573) 785-1501 in advance of tree removal work being conducted on their property.

Q. Is it true that all trees can serve as ALB hosts?

A. No. There are 13 genera of trees that are hosts to ALB in the United States. This host list was determined through studies conducted by scientists from USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS), USFS, and APHIS both here and within the insects' native range of China. The host genera include *Acer* (maple), *Aesculus* (horse chestnut), *Albizia* (mimosa), *Betula* (birch), *Celtis* (hackberry), *Cercidiphyllum* (katsura), *Fraxinus* (ash), *Platanus* (sycamore), *Populus* (poplar), *Salix* (willow), *Sorbus* (mountain ash), *Ulmus* (elm), and *Koelreuteria* (golden raintree).

Q. Has consideration been given to the effect of trees lost on Nationally Certified Wildlife Habitat areas?

A. The National Wildlife Federation's Nationally Certified Wildlife Habitat program encourages people to register their habitats (property) online to aid in showing individuals the benefits of gardening for wildlife. We recognize that this is a worthwhile endeavor and commend citizens who register as part of this program. However, trees found infested with ALB, whether part of this program or not, will be removed as part of the eradication effort.

Q. What is happening with tree stumps as part of the removal process?

A. Stump grinding will be the primary method for dealing with tree stumps. If a stump cannot be removed due to various factors, such as physical barriers, property issues, or risk of erosion, then the stump will be treated with herbicide to kill the stump. There are two herbicides available for use in the treatment of infested stumps that cannot be ground—Garlon 3A and Pathfinder II. All herbicide applications will be made in accordance with State of Ohio and Federal pesticide laws and regulations. The application of all herbicides will also be monitored by program personnel to ensure compliance.

Q. Will there be ongoing incineration of the trees removed?

A. No. We are not incinerating removed trees. All trees removed will be chipped to less than an inch in two dimensions, which are then considered “deregulated” or pose no threat to spreading ALB.

Q. Are the chips from removed trees available for residents to have?

A. Yes. Chips are available for residents of Tate Township for their personal use. Residents can go to the marshalling yard, located at 2896 State Route 232 in Bethel, to pick up chips. The vehicle for transporting chips should be a light duty (GVWR) Class 3 truck or equivalent, and not a larger vehicle. You will need to provide proof of residency for Tate Township in order to receive the chips, such as a driver’s license, State identification card or real estate tax bill, voter registration card, or utility bill. You must check in at the tower with the program officials and the removal contractor when you arrive. The hours of operation for the marshalling yard are 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and closed on holidays.

Q. How many contractors bid on the contract for tree removals in Ohio?

A. Three companies applied through the competitive bid process, which was open to the public. The companies were evaluated based on a number of pre-set criteria that included price, past performance, technical capability, key personnel, and quality assurance. APHIS selected the most qualified company, which also offered the lowest cost to taxpayers, based on these criteria.

Q. Is the removal contractor selling the chipped trees for a profit?

A. No. The chips are being made available to Tate Township residents for free, and then it is up to the removal contractor to handle or dispose of the chips that remain.

Q. Are there counselors available for residents dealing with the removal of trees?

A. No. APHIS does not have the authority to make counselors available to the community. However, ODNR’s Division of Forestry is helping property owners after the tree removal process is complete to assist with reforestation. The Division of Forestry’s Chillicothe office number is (740) 774-1596 ext. 0.

Q. What kind of Federal funding is available for the eradication of the ALB from Ohio?

A. To date, APHIS has entered into a cooperative agreement with ODA to provide \$1.5 million in Federal funds to assist in staffing and oversight of the Ohio ALB cooperative eradication program. APHIS has funded \$2.7 million for the removal of infested trees, and approximately \$1 million for Federal staff to assist as well. For fiscal year 2012, APHIS has received a total of \$55.6 million for the line item “Tree & Wood Pests,” which includes the national ALB eradication program, but no determination has been made for how funds will be distributed among the different pest programs and States.

Q. Are there funds for replanting trees lost to ALB?

A. Replanting funds have not yet been secured; however, ODA and ODNR are working with the USFS to identify possible options for replanting.

Q. What is the potential impact of ALB on Ohio’s forest and economy?

A. ALB has already caused tens of thousands of hardwood trees to be destroyed in Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York. Trees in forests and cities all across America are at risk, and the potential impact on Ohio’s forest and economy is substantial. The value of Ohio’s forest products industry alone is in excess of \$15.1 billion cumulatively. Ohio harvests 300–400 million board feet of timber and grows 1 billion board feet of wood each year. There are over 180 sawmills in Ohio, and there are nearly 2,000 secondary wood products industries. About 119,000 Ohioans are employed in the forest products industry. Moreover, Ohio ranks in the top five nationally in maple syrup production, with about 118,000 gallons in 2008. Ohio has 397,000 family forest owners, who own a total of 6.2 million acres of woodland, and 1,850 woodland owners are tree farmers, who manage 383,647 acres of Ohio woodlands. The forests at risk in Ohio are a critical component of the State’s natural resources, and span nearly 8 million acres, or 30 percent of the State. These forests support important biological and ecological communities and create habitat for wildlife, forest products, clean water, and opportunities for recreation.

Q. Has APHIS looked at the economic impact of the effects of ALB nationally? And if so, what are the results?

A. While APHIS has not completed a detailed economic impact of ALB nationally, the agency has looked at the economic impact for the northeastern United States, including Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Northeastern forests produce \$178 million of timber products annually from ALB host species. The annual production of maple syrup and deciduous shade trees is valued at \$65 and \$56 million respectively. Additionally, in a 2000 study of the urban forests of nine large U.S. cities, researchers estimated that ALB could destroy as much as 35 percent of U.S. cities' tree canopy cover and 30 percent of their trees (i.e., 1.2 billion trees), with an estimated loss in value of \$669 billion. These estimates do not include the potential adverse impacts nationwide on the forest products industry (e.g., lumber and furniture), maple syrup production, fall foliage tourism, as well as the impacts from decreased property values; aesthetic damage; and lessened environmental benefits, such as clean air and water and energy-conserving shade.

Q. Has consideration been given to compensation for the loss of property value that will be a direct result of the loss of trees? What about taxes, business, and income in the area after removals are completed?

A. APHIS does not compensate property owners for the loss of trees due to ALB. ALB-infested trees will become a liability for property owners if left standing and allowed to die. If left standing, ALB-infested trees allow the insect to continue to spread to other trees and thus increase the area affected by ALB in Ohio, as well as negatively impact businesses and income in the State of Ohio.

Q. Has consideration been given to a rise in energy consumption as a result of residents losing their shade trees in the summer?

A. Yes. Unfortunately, the loss of shade trees can be a result of eradicating an outbreak of ALB. Replanting activities are a way to combat the loss of trees. USFS is the lead Federal agency for providing technical assistance to implement tree replanting and restoration efforts within regulated areas. ODA and ODNR are working with the USFS to identify possible options for replanting.

Q. Is an eradication approach similar to New Jersey's being proposed for use in Ohio?

A. Because Ohio's dating evidence is similar to that of New Jersey, and their eradication program has been successful, APHIS believes a comparable eradica-

tion strategy would benefit Ohio. Each State affected by an ALB infestation has distinct outbreak areas and unique attributes. Dating evidence has indicated that the ALB had been in New Jersey for at least 7 years before being detected. By using a strategy of high-risk host removals in New Jersey, within 2 years of initial detection, all infested trees were removed. Consequently, the State of New Jersey is on track for eradication in the next couple of years, barring any new detection (Hudson County, NJ, was declared eradicated in 2008). The Canadian Food Inspection Agency also used a similar strategy to eradicate the infestation in Toronto with equal success.

Q. Is it more effective to use staff hours to treat a tree than to remove it if it is not known to be infested?

A. No. A lot of factors can influence time and cost of treating trees as compared to conducting tree removals. Also, treated trees have to be retreated and resurveyed multiple times in successive years to prevent reinfestation and ensure eradication of ALB. It is important to note that treatment applications may not disperse uniformly, and that there is no guarantee that treated trees will not become infested.

Q. Why is the program rushing to remove infested trees if it can take several years for ALB to kill a tree?

A. The timing of removing infested trees doesn't correlate to when the tree will die from an ALB infestation. Infested trees allow the ALB population to expand and spread further; thus, the infestation becomes larger. While it may seem like the program is rushing to remove infested trees, it is important for infested trees to be removed as soon as possible to slow the spread of ALB.

Q. Will removing trees to eradicate the ALB kill more trees than the insect will kill on its own?

A. Over the long term, the removal of infested trees as part of the ALB eradication program will kill far fewer trees than if ALB is allowed to become established in Ohio. If left unchecked, ALB will continue to spread and infest additional trees, whereas ALB eradication efforts utilize a combination of visual surveys—both on the ground and in the trees to detect ALB and dramatically increase our chances of stopping the pest's spread.

Q. Will removing trees cause paved roadways to collapse?

A. There is no clear evidence that tree removal significantly increases damage to roads and sidewalks, etc. However, we are aware of such concerns and will work with the appropriate parties to address such issues should they arise.

Q. What does an infested area look like after infested and high-risk host trees are removed?

A. Depending on the number of trees removed and type of trees in a given area, the affected area can vary in what it looks like after tree removals are complete. If there is a large number of infested or high-risk host trees removed, the impact can be dramatic; however, if there is a small number of infested or high-risk host trees removed, the impact is less. Additionally, trees that are unable to support ALB development are not removed by the eradication program. These include shade trees like oaks and beech, flowering trees such as crabapple and cherry trees, and evergreen trees like pines, firs, and spruces, etc. ODNR is completing a tree species composition of the affected area to assist in the determination of such an impact.

Q. Will tree surveys continue if high-risk host trees are removed?

A. Yes. If, after completing the EA and consulting with the public through the comment process, the ALB program determines that high-risk host removal is the best option, there will still be host trees within the regulated area that require survey. Control actions generally occur within up to a half-mile radius of infested trees, and the infested area encompasses a radius of 1 ½ miles surrounding infested trees. Many host trees will remain even if high-risk removals are completed. Successive surveys will be required to detect any remaining infested trees and to confirm eradication. However, the areas where host trees have been removed would no longer have trees that ALB would be able to infest; therefore, no surveys would be needed on the properties that do not have host trees. Surveys would continue on properties within the regulated area where host trees remain to confirm eradication.

Q. Can property owners cut down infested trees for firewood and then leave the wood piles sitting on their property for years?

A. No. Unfortunately, infested trees cannot be removed by property owners because they pose a risk of further spreading ALB. All ALB-infested trees have to be removed by the eradication program. However, property owners can cut down their host trees that are not marked as infested and use the wood as firewood on their property for this winter only (through April 1, 2012). This firewood is also prohibited from leaving the property. However, if you have been notified that your property has infested trees, this activity should be coordinated with ALB eradication program officials. Please call the program at (513) 381-7180 prior to cutting.

Q. Can I move firewood from outside the regulated area, through it, then out the other side?

A. Yes, with proper documentation and safeguards to move through the regulated area, firewood from outside the regulated area can move through it, but point of origin needs to be established and documented. Please call the program at (513) 381-7180 to coordinate these activities.

Q. Are property owners holding back on reporting ALB sightings in Ohio?

A. It would be most unfortunate if residents are not reporting ALB sightings. Early detection minimizes the amount of damage caused by ALB and the response that is necessary for eradication. Not reporting an infestation will only allow the infestation to continue to spread throughout your property, your neighbor's property, your community, and ultimately throughout the State. We encourage individuals to report ALB sightings or signs of infestation. Reporting infestations saves trees.

Q. How does the program address human movement of wood that could transport ALB?

A. The ALB program is doing several things to help limit the movement of wood, including establishing the regulated area and regulatory activities to enforce the quarantine, conducting traceback and traceforward work, holding training sessions and workshops for contractors, and raising awareness. You can help by reporting suspicious behavior to the program by calling (513) 381-7180.

Q. What type of certification or training do program survey inspectors undergo?

A. All ALB staff members are trained and certified in host tree identification and ALB identification, including ALB biology and signs and symptoms of infestation. Many of the staff have forestry backgrounds and are skilled at tree identification upon entering the program. Those with less experience train with experienced staff and work alongside experienced staff until their skills are developed. In addition, the ALB program conducts quality assurance checks on completed surveys to verify accuracy of inspections.

Q. When will the survey of East Fork State Park begin? And in areas outside of Bethel?

A. The ALB program has conducted some survey activities in East Fork State Park already, concentrating around the campgrounds in the park and also around the southern perimeter of the park. These are the locations in the Park that we believe are the highest risk of introduction from the current infested

area. To date, no infested trees have been detected in East Fork State Park. And, although the program is systematically conducting surveys and radiating out from the known infested areas, including areas outside of Bethel, surveys will be reduced as program staff focuses on removals.

Q. How many trees have actually been killed by the ALB in Ohio?

A. Unfortunately, we don't know this number. This infestation started at least 7 years ago, and trees that were initially infested are most likely dead and no longer in the landscape. Surveyors do record level of infestation on host trees; however, they do not record if the host trees are alive or dead. Based on observation and experience with other ALB infestations, tree mortality typically occurs 7 to 10 years after a tree becomes infested.

Q. How many ash trees have been found to be infested with ALB?

A. As of December 16, 2011, about 350 ash trees were surveyed, and 4 are suspicious for ALB infestation. The suspect trees will be resurveyed in January to confirm infestation. Ash is a less preferred host to ALB, but ALB is able to complete its full life cycle (egg to adult) in ash trees.

Q. Where are the infested trees in Ohio located?

A. A map is available through the APHIS Web site detailing where infested trees are located. The map can be found at: www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/asian_lhb/alb_maps.shtml.

Q. My neighbors have a pink ribbon around one of their trees from a utility company. Are your marking methods coordinated with others who may be marking trees?

A. Yes. The program is working with other organizations that may be marking trees in the area. Originally, we were not aware that a utility company was using pink ribbon. The ALB program was using pink ribbon to mark ALB-suspicious trees, which needed to be followed up on with an additional survey. We now mark suspicious trees with red and white flagging tape. This color flagging tape is commercially available, so it could be used by other companies or individuals within the affected area. To our knowledge, it is not widely used, but we will coordinate with any entities if we find they are using it.

Q. What is the success rate for eradicating ALB from an area such as Bethel?

A. Since ALB was first discovered in the United States in 1996, most detections have been limited to urban and suburban areas. Detections in rural environments are relatively recent, occurring in Worcester County,

MA, and now Clermont County, OH. However, ALB can be eradicated. In 2008, ALB was declared eradicated in Illinois and in Hudson County, NJ. In 2011, ALB was declared eradicated from Islip, NY.

Q. Is there work being conducted to evaluate what trees ALB attacks when it is introduced into different landscapes (i.e., cityscapes, woodlots, dense forests, etc.)?

A. Yes. APHIS is utilizing the Technical Working Group to address this issue. The group is composed of scientists and program experts from APHIS, USFS, the U.S. National Plant Board, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, as well as experts from within Ohio.

Q. What is the natural predator of ALB in Asia?

A. USDA scientists have studied ALB predators in Asia, and while there are natural predators of ALB such as some birds and wasps, they do not limit the spread of the pest. There are no predators that reduce populations enough to limit its spread here in the United States.

Q. What is the latest research being conducted in the fight against ALB?

A. APHIS continues to work within its own agency as well as partnering agencies and organizations on research and methods development to enhance eradication strategies. Some of the current studies under development include regulatory treatments for wood, fall chemical treatments, detector dogs to aid in early detection, and traps utilizing lures to aid in early detection. We continue to adapt and utilize the latest and most effective research and science available to help us eradicate this pest.

Q. Are there research findings from APHIS available for public review?

A. Not at this time. APHIS has not compiled its research findings for public review; however, we are working on compiling these documents for posting online. There are a number of works conducted by ARS, USFS, university scientists, and other organizations who have published materials in peer-reviewed scientific journals, and those documents can be found through various online resources.

Note to Stakeholders: Stakeholder announcements and other APHIS information are available on the Internet. Go to the APHIS homepage at www.aphis.usda.gov and click on the "Newsroom" button. For additional information on this topic, contact Rhonda Santos at (508) 852-8044 or email: rhonda.j.santos@aphis.usda.gov.

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