

News From Terre Haute, Indiana

February 9, 2012

Fort Wayne forester tells of damage

Howard Greninger

The Tribune-Star

TERRE HAUTE — The emerald ash borer likely will cause as much as \$8 million in damage to Fort Wayne's ash trees by 2015, the city's manager of forestry operations told a Terre Haute audience Tuesday.

Chad Tinkel, manager of forestry operations for Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation, said the city had 14,000 ash trees in 2008, representing about 25 percent of its street tree canopy.

"Today, ash trees make up about 15 percent of the street tree population," Tinkel told more than 65 people attending a Tuesday informational meeting sponsored by Trees Inc. at the Vigo County Public Library.

Terre Haute officials are looking at ways to avoid the type of tree and financial damage Fort Wayne has incurred.

Fort Wayne has lost 7,362 ash trees since 2009.

Last year alone, the city lost 3,670 ash trees, but was able to replant 1,766 trees from a state grant. "We expect to lose 5,000 ash trees in 2012, so we will lose about 9,000 trees in two years," Tinkel said.

The city treated about 11,000 trees in 2008. However, the treatment was a soil-applied chemical that did not keep the trees from dying. It did delay the death of the trees by several years, allowing the city to better manage tree and stump removal, Tinkel said.

Terre Haute has 1,070 ash trees in its tree rows, which represents about 10 percent of the city's urban tree canopy, City Engineer Chuck Ennis said. Gordon said the number of ash trees on private property is typically four times the number on public streets.

Rob Gordon, national sales manager for Arborjet, a Massachusetts-based company that makes "tree-age," an insecticide used to combat the emerald ash borer, said an ash tree can be treated for 35 to 40 years before the cost equals the cost of cutting down a tree and removing its stump.

It costs \$750 to \$1,200 to remove a tree. The injected chemical costs \$559 a liter, which can treat 33 trees with a 10-inch diameter, according to the company's product catalog. An eight-liter case costs \$4,160. The chemical is applied every two years.

To treat a tree, workers drill small circular holes around the base of a tree trunk. A small plastic plug is then inserted into each hole. A rubber seal helps prevent chemical leakage. The chemical is then injected into the tree through the rubber seal.

The emerald ash borer measures just a half inch long and 1/8-inch wide, but within years swarms are easily spotted. The major damage to ash trees is done in the larval stage, blocking the tree's ability to move water and

nutrients to limbs and the entire tree.

The trees are attacked first in their top third, Gordon said.

Tinkel said damage from the insect, in addition to the cost of cutting down trees and grinding stumps, includes debris from falling limbs and huge chunks of bark. Fort Wayne has been able to move its debris to a sawmill, which grinds and chemically treats the wood for use as mulch.

The damage also brings costs such as 10 tort claims already filed against the city of Fort Wayne from damage to vehicles and property, Tinkel said.

Howard Greninger can be reached at (812) 231-4204 or howard.greninger@tribstar.com.