

Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan and Parkland Forest Management Framework

By Tom Witmer

Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation has recently developed two management plans for our park system. The first is a plan to address the arrival of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), an insect pest that is expected to be in Philadelphia County in the very near future. It has been found as close as Warrington, PA in spring 2012. EAB is an exotic insect that attacks all species of the genus *Fraxinus*, and results in virtually 100% mortality. The species was first discovered in the U.S. in Detroit, MI in 2002 and has been devastating ash populations in the Midwest and eastward since then. EAB has moved rapidly through Pennsylvania, and is currently found in 31 counties. Its movement is primarily due to the transportation of wood products or plants that carry the larval life stage of the insect. Roughly 6% of the trees in Philadelphia (approximately 126,000 trees) are white or green ash, and all of these trees are at risk.

The plan, developed by PP&R Natural Resources staff member Curtis Helm, follows a template developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). The initial task as outlined in the plan will be to inventory trees that are or could become hazardous if killed by EAB. In summer 2013, park ash trees within 100 feet of major trails, roadways, meeting areas and private properties will be evaluated. All potential hazard trees will be documented and marked for felling in place, removal or treatment against EAB. PP&R will use data from the completed inventory to develop a work plan and seek the funding needed to perform the recommended work. Since treatment of ash trees is costly and generally only lasts for two years, only select "high priority" trees or groups of trees will be treated. Treated trees will be re-treated every two years as long as the pest remains. It is expected that the majority of ash trees that are in park woodlands will simply be killed by the pest and fall apart over time. Planting will be done in areas where a large number of ash trees succumb to the pest.

[Download the EAB Plan](#) to learn more.

Parkland Forest Management Framework

PP&R is also in the process of developing the "Parkland Forest Management Framework". This is a broad-level plan that provides the framework to protect, maintain and restore forests (upland and riparian), shrublands, meadows and forested wetlands in PP&R parks. The scope of the plan is the natural areas within the City of Philadelphia park system, including some neighborhood parks, such as Fernhill Park, that have multiple acres of natural lands. The plan will provide an ecological assessment of the Park's forests and describe principles on enhancing and managing those forests. Some components of the plan will be:

- An overview of existing conditions, including recent forest plot data collected by the U.S. Forest Service
- A summary of past work in park natural areas
- Management goals and guiding principles
- Problems, threats and constraints
- Staffing, equipment and funding needs
- Projects that demonstrate goals put forth in the plan (demonstration projects)
- Maps that illustrate various conditions, relationships and opportunities

The plan is being developed by Biohabitats, Inc., a widely-respected environmental consultant in Baltimore, Maryland. It will be completed in March 2013, after which it will be posted on PP&R's website. Funding for the plan is being provided by the William Penn Foundation.