

Minnesota's Forests are Gypsy Moth Free for Another Year

The Challenge

In 2001, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture **uncovered the state's largest-ever infestation of gypsy moth** right in the middle of 2,500 acres of public parks, golf courses, and residential homes of metropolitan Minneapolis.

How do you inform and **gain the cooperation of 6,500 metropolitan Minneapolis residents** so an effective and timely aerial spray treatment for gypsy moth can be completed?

The Solution

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (DOA) instituted a **proactive and well-timed communications campaign**. The DOA along with USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service and the USDA Forest Service Northeastern Area designed a strategy to inform residents and allow them multiple opportunities to ask questions and seek expert advice.

Each homeowner received a letter explaining the infestation and the aerial spray treatment. Newspapers, radios and television stations were enlisted to inform readers and listeners about the extent of the problem and possible solutions.

Establishing a hot-line enabled the DOA to answer resident's questions and listen to concerns. A website provided additional resource and contact information available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition, DOA organized a series of town meetings to further encourage community input and support.

Resulting Benefits

The trees in Minneapolis are safe from gypsy moth for another year! Public support allowed **treatment efforts to occur at precisely the right time** of the moth's lifecycle.

Information is power! Of the over 400 people interviewed as a follow-up, over 79% of them would support another gypsy moth treatment effort if it were necessary.



Minneapolis' residents care deeply about their urban forests.

Follow-up trapping indicates **little or no gypsy moth present** in the Twin Cities. Given that this was Minnesota's worst infestation ever, and that caterpillar numbers were in the millions, **the treatment effort appears remarkably successful**.

Eventually gypsy moth will establish permanent residency in Minnesota. However, eliminating these start-up populations **delays the expensive never-ending battle with the destructive insect**.

A follow-up survey of affected residents indicates they felt well-informed of gypsy moth activities in their neighborhood. Although costly, **the direct mail campaign appears effective in informing residents about issues and concerns**.

The use of newspaper, radio, television, the internet, the hot-line and public meetings to augment the direct mail, not only kept the public informed of the status and progress of the project, but kept cooperating organizations in the loop as well.

Sharing Success

Minnesota Department of Agriculture's communication campaign is a good model for other states facing invasive exotic pests such as Asian longhorned beetle or emerald ash borer.

The Department developed and shared a presentation on their findings to the **Midwest Exotics Workshop in 2002**. They are in the process of finalizing a case study of their communications strategy to be shared with other states facing similar situations.



USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry

For more information, contact:

Kathryn P. Maloney, Area Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
Phone: 610-557-4103
Email: kmaloney@fs.fed.us

Michael W. Prouty, Rep.
1992 Folwell Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55108
Phone: 651-649-5276
Email: mprouty@fs.fed.us