

Keeping Everyone in the Loop

Emerald Ash Borer Web Site Provides Wealth of Timely Information

The Challenge

The emerald ash borer (EAB) was first discovered in Michigan in fall 2002. Ohio and Indiana would discover infestations the following year. Millions of trees were dead or dying from this dangerous pest. It was crucially important to create a single source of unbiased information that was readily available to a broad audience and easy to update as new information came to light. As of this writing, EAB has been confirmed in 15 States and one Canadian Province.

The Solution

In 2004, the U.S. Forest Service and Michigan State University (MSU) agreed to cooperatively create a national clearinghouse Web site for emerald ash borer information. The result: emeraldashborer.info. A great deal of thought went into how this Web site would be structured. The site's URL would be neutral and not be associated with either government or a specific State or educational institution. The U.S. Forest Service, APHIS, and other cooperators worked with MSU to create the Web site's content and design. New content is peer reviewed and undergoes an approval process. The Web site is also reviewed on a regular basis.

Resulting Benefits

Emeraldashborer.info is now clearly established as the premier Web site for EAB information and materials. The site's many contributors include Federal and State agencies, educational institutions, scientific researchers, the green industry, and the general public. This Web site is ranked in the top three search engine results generated by Google and Yahoo, the latter of which ranks it first.

This Web site is frequently cited as a reference source in general, scientific, and peer-reviewed publications, news reports, and press releases. Commendations for the site frequently mention its wealth of accurate EAB information and the resources it offers for anyone affected by the emerald ash borer.

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(from left to right) Charles Reger, NA S&PF; Ronald Murray, Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources; Gina Childs, NA S&PF; Noel Schneeberger, NA S&PF; and Deborah McCullough, Michigan State University, met with others in December 2010 to review the EAB Web site.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources employee Ron Murray believes that State agencies, in particular, have found this Web site to be a valuable tool. "It has provided authoritative information about EAB in a 'one-stop-shopping' environment for both professionals and the public to access. States can link to this site rather than having to create, update, and manage their own set of information." Murray added, "Public use of this site has undoubtedly saved hundreds, if not thousands, of phone calls to State personnel about EAB."

MSU has supported the Web site and the EAB University Webinar series by hosting both on its server at no charge, which makes this a truly cooperative venture. Links to a variety of Don't Move Firewood-related campaigns and Web sites also broaden the collaborative nature of this Web site.

Sharing Success

A wealth of information from the emeraldashborer.info Web site is being shared both nationally and internationally. In a 12-month span from December 2009 to December 2010, the site received 232,516 visits. Most of those visits came from computer users in the United States, but eight other countries were also represented, including Canada, England, China, Russia, Germany, and Australia.



USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry

For more information, contact:

Tony Ferguson, Area Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
Phone: 610-557-4103
E-mail: tferguson@fs.fed.us

Mark Buccowich, Assistant Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
Phone: 610-557-4029
E-mail: mbuccowich@fs.fed.us