



# Ash Treatment for Emerald Ash Borer Project

Green Mountain National Forest  
March 2, 2023

## GREETINGS!

The Forest Service, Green Mountain National Forest is seeking comments on the proposed Ash Treatment for Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Project. This newsletter gives a brief overview of why we are developing this project, what actions we propose, and how you can help us make the project better. Project information is available on the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) Projects website at

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=63349>,

The Forest Service is planning to treat ash trees at sites across the GMNF to respond to the arrival of Emerald Ash Borer (*Agrilus planipennis*). The Emerald Ash Borer is responsible for the destruction of tens of millions of ash trees in 30 states. Native to Asia, the first U.S. identification of Emerald Ash Borer was in southeastern Michigan in 2002. It was first detected in Vermont in 2018. The insect has the potential to destroy nearly all ash trees on the GMNF and throughout New England. The Forest Service, along with partners, is proposing to treat select groups of ash trees to conserve the genetic diversity of ash species and to support ongoing and future restoration efforts.

## PROJECT LOCATION DESCRIPTION

At this time, the project area includes 24 separate stands across the GMNF. Nine stands have been identified on the Rochester/Middlebury Ranger Districts and 15 on the Manchester Ranger District, totaling 536 acres. Maps showing these stands can be found on the project website (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=63349>).





## PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The introduction of the emerald ash borer (EAB) to the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) is expected to cause rapid declines in ash populations (*Fraxinus spp.*). There are no known effective controls to prevent rapid decline and widespread mortality of ash, degradation of forest habitat, and reduced resilience of forest ecosystems.

Tree decline and mortality has already been observed in several areas on the National Forest and widespread mortality is expected to occur over the next several years. There is an urgent need to invest in conserving trees to preserve ecosystem structure and standing genetic diversity of ash. Conserving the genetic diversity of ash is important for maintaining long-term sustainability and resilience and providing a basis for adaptation and future restoration efforts.

Ash species are an important part of northern hardwood forests and make up approximately 5 percent of forest composition. Conservation of ash is integral to meeting GMNF Land & Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) Goals such as restoring and maintaining the quality, amount, and distribution of habitats to produce viable and sustainable populations of native plants and animals. Ash conservation is also important for maintaining or restore ecological processes and systems on the GMNF, including a diversity of native vegetation.

Some genetic diversity can be conserved by protecting clusters of ash trees already on the landscape using insecticides. While treating individual trees is not a practical or feasible approach for conserving ash species across the landscape, research has shown that treating clusters of trees in scattered locations on the landscape can be a cost-effective method to conserve local genetic diversity.

## PROPOSED PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The Forest Service proposes to inject a solution of the insecticide emamectin benzoate in up to 30 ash trees in each stand to make those trees more resilient to EAB infestation. The survival of treated trees will conserve genetic diversity of local populations and contribute to genetic diversity across the landscape. Trees would be chosen with the following parameters: a mix of male and female trees, about nine to twelve inches diameter at breast height, well-spaced, healthy, vigorous, and with no more than light EAB infestation at time of treatment. A larger number of trees, with a larger diameter range, may be treated in select stands that are exemplars of ash forest habitat where legacy stands may be maintained and provide interpretive opportunities for visitors. Injection would involve boring a hole into the base of the trees where a manual application device would create pressure and force a liquid solution of insecticide into the hole. Treatments would be applied by a licensed applicator every three years between May and August for up to ten years.

This proposed treatment has been designed to incorporate applicable Forest Plan goals and objectives, standards and guidelines, and best management practices to avoid or minimize potential



environmental impacts. This project has also been developed in coordination with other land managers and partners to complement efforts across public and private lands in the region. These include the New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands, Vermont Division of Forest Parks and Recreation, Vermont Land Trust, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the University of Vermont, and the White Mountain National Forest. As the project develops, the Forest Service interdisciplinary team will gather additional data to further refine the project's objectives and more fully develop the proposed action. Comments received during public scoping will also inform this process. We want to hear from you about how we can improve this project and make it more successful.

## SUBMITTING COMMENTS

The comment period is your opportunity to be involved in this collaborative process, to comment on the proposed activities, and to help the Forest Service conserve this important species. Comments that provide relevant and new information with sufficient detail and rationale are the most useful. Provide site-specific comments about the proposed project and include supporting information you believe will help the Forest Service identify any issues or refine the environmental effects analysis of our proposal. The Forest Service reads and considers all comments and identifies the key issues for consideration to help guide the environmental analysis and decision-making processes. Your comments will help to shape this project and help us conserve ash species on the landscape.

Submitting a comment:

- In order for your comments to best be considered, they should be submitted in writing, using one of the following methods:
  - Online: [comments-eastern-green-mt-finger-lakes@usda.gov](mailto:comments-eastern-green-mt-finger-lakes@usda.gov)
  - Mail: USDA Forest Service, 99 Ranger Road, Rochester, VT 05767
  - FAX: (802) 767-4777, ATTN: Jay Strand, Ash Treatment Project
- If you need to make alternate arrangements for submitting comments, please contact Jay Strand, NEPA planner, at [jay.strand@usda.gov](mailto:jay.strand@usda.gov), or at 802-767-4261, ext. 5522.
- Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record will be available for public inspection.
- Comments must be received **by April 6<sup>th</sup> 2023**, to be considered timely.

This proposed action potentially falls in a category of actions excluded from analysis in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement, as proposals of this type individually and cumulatively do not have a significant effect on the environment. This project is anticipated to be categorically excluded under Section 603 of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act.

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