

EVALUATION OF PUBLIC AWARENESS OF ISSUES RELATING TO FIREWOOD MOVEMENT AND THE EXOTIC EMERALD ASH BORER IN MICHIGAN

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ABSTRACT

The exotic emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*) was first identified in Michigan in 2002 and has killed millions of ash trees (*Fraxinus* spp.) there and in surrounding states. A key goal in management of emerald ash borer is to reduce the insect's artificial spread to new locations through its movement in firewood. The movement of firewood is now regulated in some infested states, as well as in some uninfested ones. Inspections of firewood in state and federally operated campgrounds have revealed that ash firewood is still being used and is likely being moved around Michigan. Public education campaigns have been implemented to inform people about emerald ash borer and the associated firewood regulations. These educational programs use fliers, billboards, radio and television advertisements, newspaper articles, and television documentaries, and other media.

During the summer of 2006, two types of questionnaire-based surveys were conducted at state park campgrounds throughout Michigan to (1) determine public awareness of the regulations associated with the movement of firewood, (2) determine any demographics that influence

a patron's knowledge about the firewood regulations, and (3) identify the components of the educational program that are reaching the most campground patrons. The first type of questionnaire was distributed at selected state parks and self-administered by campground patrons. The second type of questionnaire was administered by a researcher at selected state parks.

Based on the results of the researcher-administered questionnaires, approximately one-quarter of campground patrons bring their own firewood with them, and of these about one-quarter travel over 200 miles to camp. Most campground patrons (95%) are aware that there are regulations relating to the movement of firewood, and when asked if they had heard of emerald ash borer, almost 91% indicated that they had. The researcher-administered surveys also revealed that patrons are hearing about emerald ash borer and the firewood regulations through educational outreach programs. The results of these questionnaire-based surveys will help focus future efforts on the outreach methods that are apparently the most effective in educating the public about emerald ash borer.