

Emerald Ash Borer Response

HENNEPIN COUNTY
MINNESOTA

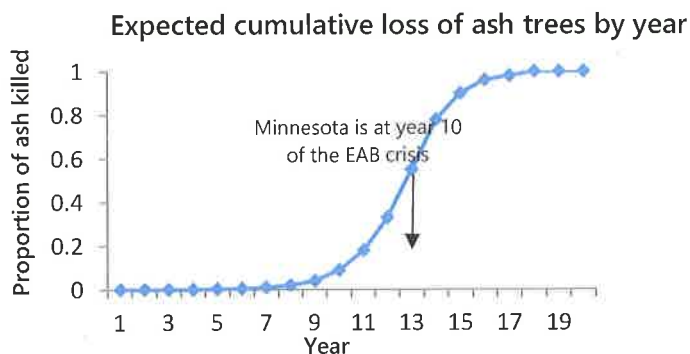
Fund local efforts to fight emerald ash borer

About 15 percent of all trees in Hennepin County are ash trees. Ash trees were planted extensively on private and public property to replace elm trees lost to Dutch elm disease. Throughout Minnesota, there are one billion ash trees and most will be infested by the emerald ash borer over the next decade. Once infested, ash trees die quickly and become safety hazards. State funds can help counties, cities and park districts remove and replace trees to restore our environment.

Responding to this crisis will severely stress local government

The emerald ash borer has infested ash trees in 17 Minnesota counties. Based on lessons learned from states such as Michigan and Ohio, the number of ash trees becoming infested will expand at an exponential rate. Managing dead and dying trees will reach a tipping point that will overwhelm local financial and staffing capabilities.

- Removing and replacing one tree costs roughly \$1,000.
- About 400,000 ash trees are on public property in Hennepin County. This property is managed by Hennepin County, 45 cities and park districts.



Contacts

Hennepin County Intergovernmental Relations

Kareem Murphy

Director

Office: 612-596-9711

Cell: 612-559-5279

kareem.murphy@hennepin.us

Kirk Pederson

Public Policy Manager

Office: 612-348-3269

Cell: 612-432-0447

kirk.pederson@hennepin.us

Hennepin County Environment and Energy

John Evans

Assistant Director

Office: 612-348-4046

john.evans@hennepin.us

Mary Finch

Supervising Environmentalist

Office: 612-543-1595

mary.finch@hennepin.us

Website

hennepin.us/ashtrees

Allocating financial resources now achieves the best opportunity to manage the response

Starting now rather than waiting for the crisis to accelerate is critical. Once the infestation takes hold, streets and parks will be full of dangerous dead ash trees or devoid of trees altogether. Experiences from other communities demonstrate that a proactive investment is cost-effective, saving millions of dollars later. Financial resources would be used to:

- Proactively remove and replace ash trees. This strategy allows replacement trees to become established, reducing the ecological and aesthetic impacts of mass tree removals.
- Inventory and monitor trees to allow for rapid responses to infestations, which slows the spread and makes the response more manageable.
- Diversify trees in our communities to reduce the possibility of future tree loss stemming from over planting of any one kind of tree susceptible to destructive pests or diseases.

Minnesota has a history of providing state resources in response to a community forestry crisis

During the Dutch elm disease outbreak in the 1970s, the state realized that local units of government did not have the financial resources to address the crisis. The legislature funded local efforts to remove and replace the millions of elm trees that were being lost. This crucial investment resulted in the green and vibrant tree-lined communities we have today.

- In 1976 and 1977, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated nearly \$30 million for matching grants to cities to aid in slowing down the spread of Dutch elm disease. Then, for the next decade, the state provided approximately \$150 million to fight Dutch elm disease and provided millions more for community forestry.
- In today's dollars, the total amount that the state appropriated for grants to local units of government for shade tree replacement is about \$500 million.
- The EAB threat is worse than Dutch elm disease. There are five times more ash trees in Minnesota now compared to the number of elm trees at the time Dutch elm disease took hold.

Trees benefit the community

Like roads, bridges and sewers, trees are important infrastructure that require support and maintenance. Trees:

- Make our air healthier by filtering pollution
- Mitigate stormwater and improve water quality by reducing erosion – an average tree intercepts about 1,685 gallons of rainfall annually
- Provide shade, which can increase the longevity of pavement and reduce local temperatures by up to 9 degrees F
- Increase property values and enhance aesthetics – values of landscaped properties with trees are 5 to 20 percent higher than non-landscaped properties
- Create wildlife habitat

