

Virginia Forest Landowner Update

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You Ain't From Around Here!

One Simple Way to Prevent Exotic Invasives From Spreading – Don't Move Firewood.

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I will be featuring an invasive plant species in each newsletter. This section will provide resources to help you identify and control these plants and insects, hopefully before they become a problem!

Exotic invasives are non-native plants and insects that are able to thrive and spread aggressively outside their natural range. When spread is extensive, they can alter ecosystem function by replacing native species, changing forest structure, decreasing forest productivity and biodiversity. Some key characteristics include: prolific seeding or reproduction, efficient dissemination, adaptability to different environments, rapid growth, and lack of natural controls. Landowners can help stop invasives before they get out of control by 1. inspecting their property regularly, 2. maintaining a healthy forest with minimal disturbance, 3. treating invasives as soon as they are detected and 4. rehabilitating sites after eradication.

On a recent trip to the West, a family purchased firewood at a lovely campsite along the Rogue River in Oregon. Having used only about half of the pieces, they loaded the rest up in the car and drove down to a campsite in the Redwoods in Northern California - where they used the rest of the firewood. That's when one family member recalled a poster she saw back in Blacksburg – a poster titled “Don't Move Firewood”. Of course, by then, the deed had already been done.



Firewood...what dangers lurk inside? Photo by: Robert L. Anderson

What could have gone wrong? Why shouldn't firewood be moved? The answer is two words – exotic invasives. Many dangerous insects and diseases live on firewood – and moving firewood can introduce them into new, previously uninfested areas. You may recall from a previous installment of “You Ain't From Around Here” that humans are the main mover of the gypsy moth (which on its own can only travel 50 feet in a lifetime). Much of the gypsy moth movement occurs via firewood.

In California and Oregon, the main concern is transporting the pathogen that causes Sudden Oak Death. Here in Virginia, the Asian longhorned beetle, Sirex woodwasp, and oak wilt can all be transported on firewood. But the main concern in Virginia is introduction of the emerald ash borer (EAB).

This insect was just introduced to the United States in 2002 (accidentally) and is already responsible for more than 20 million dead and dying ash trees in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, and for a loss of tens of millions of dollars. The EAB only feeds on ash trees. Adults eat the leaves, but don't cause any real damage. The larvae (immature stage) are the problem. They eat the inner bark of the trees, disrupting the flow of water and nutrients. In as little as 2 years, an infested ash tree can die. Although the adults can fly up to half a mile, the main method of movement is on fire wood.



Wood galleries carved by EAB larvae. Photo by: Michigan Department of Agriculture.



Adult EAB (a bright metallic-green body). Photo by: David Cappaert, Michigan State University.

Currently, there are no major outbreaks of EAB in Virginia. But one simple movement of infested firewood could suddenly change that. So please – DON'T MOVE FIREWOOD! Buy firewood on-site and either use it all on site or leave the extra behind. In Virginia, most State Park campgrounds offer one complimentary bundle of firewood, and have more available for sale. If, like the aforementioned family out West, you accidentally move wood, please burn it all before you leave the campsite.

For more information on the dangers of moving firewood and the emerald ash borer, please visit:

www.emeraldashborer.info

www.michigan.gov

<http://na.fs.fed.us/fhp/eab/>

www.stopthebeetle.info

To see color photos of the EAB, please visit www.cnr.vt.edu/forestupdate.

To report an EAB sighting or suspected outbreak in Virginia, please call the emerald ash borer hotline at 1/866-325-0023.