

# Questions and Answers: Ohio Environmental Assessment for the Asian Longhorned Beetle Cooperative Eradication Program in Clermont County

## Background

### Q. What is an environmental assessment?

**A.** An environmental assessment, or “EA,” is a public document that evaluates whether a proposed Federal action would have significant effects on the environment. Preparing such documentation is part of the process to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). Under NEPA, all Federal agencies are required to take a close look at the potential environmental impacts of their proposed actions prior to making decisions. The process helps to ensure better informed decisions and citizen involvement in making them.

### Q. Why is this environmental assessment being issued?

**A.** The Ohio Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) Cooperative Eradication Program is proposing new actions to get rid of the beetle from within Clermont County. As required by NEPA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) must evaluate whether any of these proposed actions may affect the environment. The environmental assessment allows us to look at any potential environmental impacts and consider them before making a decision on how to proceed.

### Q. Didn't you already issue an environmental assessment about the ALB for Ohio? Why do you need a second one?

**A.** Yes; this is APHIS' second environmental assessment related to ALB in Ohio. The first assessment, issued in July 2011 and finalized in September 2011, considered two alternatives: (1) no action by APHIS, and (2) cut down and remove beetle-infested trees.

This second environmental assessment identifies and evaluates three new alternatives, plus the alternative of no action by APHIS.

### Q. Why did it take so long to issue the second environmental assessment?

**A.** APHIS took the time necessary to examine the specifics around the ALB infestation affecting Clermont County. We also worked with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to complete a forest tree species composition report, which is included in the assessment, and APHIS collaborated with key organizations in our review of the assessment before making it available for public comment.

### Q. Has APHIS issued other environmental assessments related to ALB?

**A.** Yes. APHIS has prepared and completed several other environmental assessments for the ALB Cooperative Eradication Program that are relevant to this current assessment. APHIS' last ALB-related environmental assessment was completed in September 2011 for efforts in Ohio. Other environmental assessments have been issued previously for other affected States. These documents are available on the APHIS Web site at [www.aphis.usda.gov/plant\\_health/ea/alb.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/ea/alb.shtml).

### Q. What is the difference between an “environmental assessment (EA),” an “environmental impact statement (EIS),” and a “finding of no significant impact (FONSI)”?

**A.** Each of these documents provides citizens and community leaders an opportunity to learn about and be involved in the agency's decision-making process. The difference between them has to do with their content and purpose:

- An EA is a concise document that briefly provides evidence and analysis for determining the environmental impacts of a proposed Federal action and alternatives.
- An EIS is a detailed written statement on the environmental impact of a proposed action; it is prepared if significant impacts are likely and if an agency is proposing a major action that significantly affects the quality of the environment.
- A FONSI is a document that presents the reasons why the agency has concluded that there are no significant environmental impacts projected to occur upon implementation of a proposed action.

**Q. What are the steps involved in the environmental assessment process?**

**A.** First, the agency compiles and prepares the environmental assessment itself, consulting with other government agencies and cooperators as needed to ensure a sufficient level of analysis. Once complete, the document is made available to the public for comment. After all comments are received and considered, the assessment process can conclude with a decision not to pursue the proposed actions, the issuance of a FONSI, the preparation of an EIS, or the issuance of another environmental assessment.

You can learn more about NEPA and the environmental review process in "A Citizen's Guide to the National Environmental Policy Act: Having Your Voice Heard," issued by The Council on Environmental Quality of the Executive Office of the President. The guide is available on the APHIS Web site or can be downloaded directly at [http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/Citizens\\_Guide\\_Dec07.pdf](http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/Citizens_Guide_Dec07.pdf).

## **Details on May 2012 Environmental Assessment**

**Q. What does this document do?**

**A.** This environmental assessment evaluates whether the proposed alternatives for the ALB Cooperative Eradication Program in Clermont County, OH, could affect the quality of the environment. It also allows the public to comment on the proposed alternatives relative to possible environmental impacts, giving them an opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process.

**Q. What *doesn't* this document do?**

**A.** This environmental assessment does not make a decision on which alternative APHIS and its State partners will pursue in its ALB eradication efforts. This decision cannot be made until after APHIS and its State partners have received and considered all public comments on the assessment.

**Q. What are the alternatives outlined in this environmental assessment?**

**A.** The four alternatives being considered are:

- (A) no action;
- (B) removal of infested trees and high-risk host trees up to a ½-mile from infested trees (full host removal);
- (C) removal of infested trees and imidacloprid treatment of high-risk host trees up to a ½-mile from infested trees; and
- (D) infested host removal and combination of removal or imidacloprid treatment of high-risk hosts.

**Q. Where is the area that would be affected by the alternatives proposed?**

**A.** The affected area surrounds the initial beetle detections, which occurred approximately 2 miles southwest from the Village of Bethel in Clermont County, OH. However, this environmental assessment not only covers the initial infestation and surrounding quarantined area, but all of Clermont County where the ALB may be found during delimitation surveys.

**Q. What is APHIS' preference out of the alternatives proposed?**

**A.** APHIS' preference is any of the alternatives, other than taking no action. Our goal is to find the most prudent, least disruptive means available for eradicating ALB from Clermont County.

**Q. What is being evaluated when anticipating how the alternatives might affect the quality of the environment?**

**A.** The environmental assessment considers, among other things, the potential impacts on:

- 1) the human population;
- 2) ecological resources such as parks and preserves, firewood, and forest wildlife;
- 3) cumulative effects, which may result from the incremental impact of an action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions;
- 4) threatened and endangered species per the Endangered Species Act, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act; and
- 5) other considerations such as environmental justice in minority populations and low-income populations, protection of children from environmental health risks and safety risks, and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

**Q. What environmental impacts do you know of already?**

**A.** First, the eradication program is currently only removing trees known to be infested and conducting surveys to detect ALB-infested trees. APHIS and its State partners are aware of the federally protected Indiana bat and are working closely with the U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) by taking actions necessary to minimize the impact to this endangered species.

**Q. Who has been consulted as part of this environmental assessment process?**

**A.** APHIS consulted individuals within its own programs and services, as well as individuals at the Ohio Department of Agriculture, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the Ohio State University, FWS, U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers, Ohio Historical Society, Clermont County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency.

## Public Comments

### **Q. Where can I obtain copies of the environmental assessment?**

**A.** You can access the document through the APHIS Web site at [www.aphis.usda.gov/plant\\_health/ea/alb.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/ea/alb.shtml).

You can also obtain copies by contacting Dr. Brendon Reardon via email at [brendon.reardon@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:brendon.reardon@aphis.usda.gov) or postal mail at: USDA/APHIS, Attention: Dr. Brendon Reardon, 4700 River Road, Unit 137, Riverdale, MD 20737. Your request should refer to the document entitled "Asian Longhorned Beetle Cooperative Eradication Program in Clermont County, Ohio, May 2012."

In addition, copies are available through the Ohio ALB Cooperative Eradication Program office, located at 1761-A State Route 125, Amelia, OH 45102.

### **Q. How do I submit comments on the proposed alternative actions outlined in the environmental assessment?**

**A.** Anyone wishing to comment on the document should send their remarks to Dr. Brendon Reardon at the email or mailing address noted above. Any comments received will be considered and may result in changes to the proposed activities. Individuals are encouraged to participate in the decision-making process by submitting comments.

### **Q. How long do I have to review and comment on the proposed actions?**

**A.** The comment period is open until Monday, July 9, 2012.

### **Q. Will I receive a reply back if I submit comments?**

**A.** APHIS will address all comments at the close of the open comment period and make its final determination available on the APHIS Web site at [www.aphis.usda.gov/plant\\_health/ea/alb.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/ea/alb.shtml). However, since a large number of comments are expected, it is unlikely that APHIS will respond to people individually.

### **Q. What comes next after the comment period closes?**

**A.** Once all comments are received and considered, APHIS can make a determination regarding the potential environmental impacts of the proposed eradication activities and make that available on the APHIS Web site at [www.aphis.usda.gov/plant\\_health/ea/alb.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/ea/alb.shtml).

## Additional Information

### **Q. What can residents do to protect themselves against the ALB, or support efforts to fight it?**

**A.** Since adult beetles have already started to emerge from infested trees in Ohio, residents can be on the lookout and report any beetle sightings or signs of infestation by calling 1-866-702-9938 or the local Ohio ALB Cooperative Eradication Program office at (513) 381-7180. You can also report sightings or signs online at [www.BeetleBusters.info](http://www.BeetleBusters.info).

### **Q. Where can I go for more information?**

**A.** For additional information about this topic and other ALB issues, visit [www.BeetleBusters.info](http://www.BeetleBusters.info), or call the Ohio ALB Cooperative Eradication Program office at (513) 381-7180. You can also find out more about APHIS and its work, including general ALB program information, by visiting the agency's homepage at [www.aphis.usda.gov](http://www.aphis.usda.gov).

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