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News Release

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MASSACHUSETTS ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE ERADICATION PROGRAM DETERMINES NEXT STEPS IN WORCESTER COUNTY

WASHINGTON, March 31, 2014 — The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) together with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) today announced its 2014 priorities in eradicating the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) from Worcester County, Massachusetts.

The program will continue survey efforts of host trees by using visual surveys completed by specially trained federal, state ground survey crews and tree climbers, as well as contracted ground surveyors. Currently, survey contracts exist with Davey Tree Expert Company and Delta-21 Resources Inc.

Surveys will continue within the current regulated area. While surveys will not end until the program is confident the beetle has been eliminated, the program is working to complete initial surveys of all host trees within the regulated area. The program will also conduct surveys in the bordering towns of Sterling, Northborough, Westborough and Millbury. Surveys in the bordering towns are being done proactively in hopes of confirming that beetle is not beyond the known infestation.

These surveys will help determine the boundary of the infestation and the program anticipates they will be completed by September 30, 2014. Since August of 2008, the program has surveyed over 4 million host trees. A map showing 2014 survey areas is available online at www.aphis.usda.gov.

The eradication program will not use pesticide treatment applications in Worcester County at this time. It is critical that the boundaries of the infestation are identified through survey efforts in order to prevent the infestation from spreading.

Infested trees will continue to be removed throughout the year as they are detected. To date, 23,549 infested trees and 10,250 high-risk host trees have been removed. Additional high-risk host tree removals have taken place on 1400 acres within the city of Worcester, and the towns of West Boylston, Boylston, Holden and Shrewsbury. The program will continue to evaluate the use of tree removals from high-risk areas as needed.

DCR will continue its tree replanting efforts within the regulated area where trees were removed as part of the ALB eradication effort. To schedule an appointment with a DCR Forester, property owners should call 508-852-8073.

Currently, there are 110 square miles under regulation in Worcester County, which includes all of the city of Worcester, West Boylston, Boylston, Shrewsbury and a portion of the towns of Holden and Auburn.

Program staff continues to monitor the regulated area, respond to service calls and conduct training sessions for compliance agreements. The eradication program holds compliance agreements with 3,682 individuals working within the regulated area. Compliance trainings are available for businesses and individuals who perform work that would result in the movement or transport of wood materials in the regulated area. To register, please call 508-852-8110.

The program continues to work with entomologists and foresters from APHIS, DCR, the U.S. Forest Service and Pennsylvania State University to further develop pheromone traps, designed to lure and capture the insect. Trap placements in Massachusetts are expected to begin in June.

Additional methods development projects include regulatory treatments for wood and nursery stock, looking at chip size and grinding techniques to deregulate host material, and assessing the use of pesticide treatments in the fall. Research continues with analysis to determine how fast the insect spreads on its own, evaluating the host trees the beetle attacks for preference and range, DNA analysis and behavioral experiments.

APHIS has also determined that it is necessary to add a treatment schedule for ALB in the Plant Protection and Quarantine Treatment Manual. A treatment evaluation document has been prepared that discusses the existing treatment schedule and explains why this change is necessary. The document is available to the public for review and comment until April 11. You can access the “Notice of Availability of a Treatment Evaluation Document for Heat Treatment for Asian Longhorned Beetle” (Docket No. APHIS-2013-0094) online at <http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=APHIS-2013-0094-0002>.

Members of the public are encouraged to inspect their trees for signs of damage caused by the insect and report any suspicious findings. Firewood and other regulated articles are currently prohibited from leaving the regulated area. For more information about the beetle and program activities, please visit www.aphis.usda.gov or www.AsianLonghornedBeetle.com or call the Massachusetts ALB Eradication Program directly at 508-852-8090.

Note to Reporters: USDA news releases, program announcements and media advisories are available on the Internet and through Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds. Go to the APHIS news release page at www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom and click on the RSS feed link.

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