Corinth Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan
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Accepted by:

Problem: Emerald ash borer, a non-native beetle from southeast Asia introduced to North American in the 1990s, feeds on and kills all three species of ash trees native to Vermont. First detected in Vermont in 2018, the presence of EAB was confirmed in Corinth in 2024. Black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*) and green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) are extremely susceptible to mortality from emerald ash borer infestation. White ash (*Fraxinus americana),* the most abundant ash species in Corinth's upland and roadside forests, may survive EAB infestation for years or decades longer than other ash species. However, there is no known way to predict which ash trees will succumb to EAB infestation. Due to the extremely brittle and unpredictable nature of EAB-infested dead and dying ash trees, and the quick rate of decline (tree death is within 3-5 years of infestation), many land managers are pre-emptively cutting ash trees that pose future risk and expense to the town when they fall on roads.

Goals: The goals of this EAB management plan are to:

1. prevent damage and injury that may occur from falling pieces of infested ash trees or whole ash trees that are in the town right-of-way.
2. reduce demands on the local road crew who manage the town right-of-way by preemptively removing ash and contracting tree services to manage brush and logs;
3. spread out the cost of ash tree removals, an expense borne by the municipality;
4. be ready to apply for any grant funding to support EAB management if it becomes available;
5. follow the Slow the Spread recommendations that keep infested or potentially infested ash trees within the town;
6. plan for wood utilization in the community if landowners do not want to keep the wood; and
7. raise awareness about the prevalence and location of ash trees throughout town and the risks they face from emerald ash borer infestation;

Strategies: The Town of Corinth will address ash tree management using the following strategies:

1. The select board will appoint the town tree warden or his or her appointee as project manager.
2. The Town will remove ash trees within the municipal right-of-way that are likely to fall into the road when they die.
3. Plan for proactive removal of ash trees within the municipal right-of-way through a geographically staged approach defined by road segment. Using municipal funds allocated for ash removals and grant funding if it should become available, the town will:
    - seek requests for bids from loggers and arborists to cut roadside ash over 6 inches diameter-at-breast-height as marked by the tree warden or his or her assigned deputy, volunteer, or contractor.
    - complete ash cutting and removal utilizing time, expertise, and equipment provided by the Corinth Town Highway crew for trees for ash trees under 12 inches diameter-at-breast-height; or
    - a combination of the two approaches listed above as determined by tree size, Corinth road crew time and equipment availability, and scope of work each year.
4. Prioritize road segments for ash removals following a pilot project of roadside ash removals on a lightly-travelled road that will help identify best practices going forward. Road segments prioritized for ash removals will be ranked based on the number and density of ash trees that pose elevated risk to road safety; local traffic patterns; the condition and size of existing ash trees; and access needs within town.
5. Aim to budget at least $5000 per year to finance roadside ash tree removals.
6. Establish a location to accept either ash branches for chipping on site, or chipped ash branches brought to this location.
7. If not removed by the contractor, establish a marshalling yard within Corinth to accept any ash logs not kept by the contractor or the landowner on whose land the right-of-way passes.
8. Establish a communication plan with landowners along roads prioritized for removals to notify them of ash tree removals and ask if the landowner will be keeping the downed logs.
9. Establish a communication plan with the town to notify all residents of the ash removal projects and any associated road closures, explain the risks associated with infested ash trees, and accept feedback.
10. All contractors will be required to coordinate with the Town Road Foreman to determine the project scope, location, and start date.

11. All expenditures by contractors must be approved in advance by the select board
12. Require that anyone cutting ash in the right-of-way ensure that logs are not left in the ditch or where they will interfere with town road equipment.
13. Update this plan every year to stay abreast of EAB spread, achieved objectives, and planning necessary for future funding applications should they become available.

Notes on Ash Tree Removals

Trees declining due to EAB weaken quickly. This means that as time goes on, the likelihood of the trees falling apart can be expected to steadily climb. While the risk of these trees goes up over time even if left alone, the weakened wood poses higher risks to the workers performing the removals. The more technical the removal, (involving climbing, rigging, or other advanced methods) the more important it is that the workers can rely on the strength of the wood, to withstand the forces exerted by the climbing, cutting, and rigging processes. The most difficult and costly trees to remove may be removed first, since risk involved in the process of removal can be expected to be at its lowest point now and will increase going forward.

This increase in risk and cost makes it prudent to remove the ash trees soon. The town will put the work out to bid this year (2025) to cut the trees in the worst condition before the end of the year.

Notes on Lowering the Cost of Removals

There are over a thousand ash trees in Corinth's current roadside ash inventory, which covers roughly half of the Class 2 and Class 3 roads in our town. Removal of all municipally-managed ash trees is likely infeasible. There are, however, several options for lowering cost.

1. Leave logs lying on site. The trees pose no risk once they are lying on the ground. All contractors will be instructed to leave wood in log lengths within the Request for Proposals (RFP).
2. Provide a nearby dump site for chips. This will be more convenient for contractors. A local farm would be fine. A town parking lot, or wherever the road crew dumps woody debris.
3. Leave small (<6" DBH) ash trees to die in place. If a small tree dies and falls on the road or a vehicle, it is very unlikely to cause any real damage. These trees will not increase in price much going forward, because they are not large enough to require special techniques.
4. Remove the worst trees first. The largest, most difficult, most precariously located trees should be taken down first since those pose the highest risk and the cost of removing them will likely increase as they deteriorate. This strategy will result in a lower number of removals in the first round of removals since difficult trees can sometimes cost thousands of dollars to take down. But going forward the pace will increase.
5. Concentrate each batch of removals in a small area. This is crucial to make traffic control and project management easier for the contractor.
6. Advertise the RFP aggressively. More bids will yield more choices for the municipality.

Notes on the Request for Proposals

- Provide a map as part of an RFP for bids on the removals.
- Provide a list and map of the landowners who want to keep the wood.
- Mark trees with tape or paint before the RFP goes out.
- Provide a table that summarizes the numbers and sizes of trees that are being removed for contractors to use for pricing.
- Follow all Corinth procurement policies.

Notes on Action Steps

Discuss, amend, and vote to accept this plan when complete.

Empower or solidify who will be responsible for carrying out the parts of the plan.

Apply for funding through any available Grants. https://vtcommunityforestry.org/municipal-assistance/financial-assistance

Select a geographic area to begin the removals.

Contact all the landowners with frontage on the road that will be treated.

Mark the trees for removal.

Create an RFP for the removals.

Select contractor.

Ensure that removals are complete (visual confirmation is important. It can be easy to miss a tree in a big job.)

Pay Contractor once terms of contract are complete.

Use this information to help adjust subsequent fiscal year budgets and to create amendments to this plan.