

REPORT

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE: DECEMBER 3, 2013

FROM: Parks and Open Space Department

DATE: November 20, 2013

SUBJECT: Emerald Ash Borer 2013 Update

LOCATION:

WARD: Town wide

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RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the update report addressing the Emerald Ash Borer from the Parks and Open Space Department, dated November 20, 2013, be received; and
2. That the Memorandum of Understanding with the Eastern Ontario Model Forest be updated to include all woodland park properties in the Town and executed in accordance with By-law 2013-057.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- Throughout 2013 Forestry staff continued implementing the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Management program
- Ash tree injections included 2944 municipal trees.
- To date the overall efficacy of the Ash Tree Treatment Program is approximately 99%
- Slightly more than 1100 ash trees were removed from active parks and along roadways
- A total of 344 ash trees were replaced on the public road allowance and in active parks.
- It is anticipated the 2014 Woodlands Conservation Program will begin in January with a goal of 34 woodlot properties. This project would be a continuation from the Pilot Project undertaken last winter.
- Work in woodlots is expected to be completed over portions of next winter, summer and fall when the ground conditions permit.
- Prior to closing the first round of park properties, an EAB Public Meeting will take place; it is scheduled for January 22nd, 2014.
- Staff are recommending updating the Memorandum of Understanding that was executed with the Eastern Ontario Model Forest in 2004 to include all woodland park properties in the Town. This will allow an expansion of the

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number of woodlots that are “certified sustainable” by the Forest Stewardship Council - an internationally recognized forest stewardship program. This would increase the number of Town woodlots as “certified sustainable” from the current 3 to all 282 properties.

- Through the EAB Monitoring Program, for the fourth successive year the town’s EAB consultant, BioForest Technologies Inc. installed and monitored the green leaf volatile trap program (100 traps spread around town on a grid system). Through biweekly monitoring it is expected that the EAB population decline that is predicted will be documented to provide the data necessary to determine the point to begin decreasing the intensity/frequency of the Ash Tree Treatment Program.
- Community engagement has been critical in raising awareness of EAB; an updated, aggressive communications campaign was carried out to encourage private ash tree owners to treat their trees. The town’s website, social media, Oakville Transit bus and transit shelter advertising, posters and message boards within town facilities, full-page ads in local papers, and participation in community events have all been used with a high degree of success in providing public awareness and engagement.

BACKGROUND:

At its meeting of June 17, 2013 Council approved the Emerald Ash Borer - Update Report. Since then, as part of the town’s base EAB Management Program a number of programs have continued that are outlined within this report. This report provides an overview of the 2013 EAB program and accomplishments, as well as providing information to Council on the upcoming Woodlands Conservation Program to be initiated in January 2014. The following programs were continued in 2013;

- Ash tree treatment program
- Ash tree removal program – woodlands conservation program
- Ash tree replanting program
- EAB monitoring program
- Community engagement program

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

Ash Tree Treatment Program

Treated 2,944 trees over the summer; this included treating 794 “vulnerable” ash trees that were last treated in 2012. New research from Dr. Deb McCullough from Michigan State University demonstrates the capability to successfully treat ash trees that have higher levels of branch dieback than previously suggested. In addition, green ash trees are beginning to show a somewhat lower tolerance to larvae feeding damage than white ash trees. Urban forest managers throughout the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) are beginning to see the impacts of beginning a

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treatment program too late. All these factors lead Forestry staff to the conclusion that “vulnerable” ash trees needed to be treated in back to back years in 2013. A “vulnerable” ash tree was defined as a green ash tree greater than 30 cm in diameter that was treated for the first time in 2012. Staff treated approximately 794 “vulnerable” ash trees this year. To date the overall efficacy of the Ash Tree Treatment Program is approximately 99%.

Ash Tree Removal Program

Road Allowance and Active Parks

The Forestry Section removed just over 1100 ash trees this summer and fall. Tree removal was based on a strategy of ‘optimizing risk management’; in other words the ash trees that staff assessed as most structurally weakened by EAB infection and/or could pose the greatest public safety threat were selected for inclusion in 2013. Originally staff was planning on removing approximately 500 trees, but due to delays in stumping, combined with concerns expressed from the community, staff reprioritized efforts and accelerated removals to double the expected number of ash trees to be removed from roadways and active parks. The program was well received by the public.

At the time of writing the staff report the stumps from these 1100 trees are being removed to prepare the site for replanting in spring/fall 2014.

Woodlands Conservation Program

As outlined in the May 22, 2013 staff report, ash trees located in woodland parks would be the focus for the “[...] latter part of 2013 and into the winter of 2014.” Through the Purchasing Division a Professional Forestry Services Contract was awarded to prepare the necessary background documents. This project will be a continuation from the pilot project undertaken last winter. As part of the pilot project in 2013, it included the establishment of the first woodland park regeneration site – called a ‘Prime Site’- at Perkins Passage Park during the Mayor’s annual Arbor Week ceremonial tree planting event on May 17th through a partnership with Tree Canada and Communities in Bloom. This involved a community tree plant with Oakvillegreen Conservation Association and volunteers from Whole Foods. A \$25,000 grant from the corporate sponsor - CN EcoConnexions Program helped support this undertaking. Since harvesting of trees is only feasible under certain ground conditions, the woodlands removal program is expected to be completed over portions of next winter, summer and fall when the ground conditions permit.

2014 Woodlands Conservation Program

The following table lists the 34 Park Properties scheduled for inclusion in 2014. The table indicates which park properties and corresponding level of operational impact:

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WOODLAND NAME	LEVEL OF OPERATIONAL IMPACT
ARBOURVIEW TRAIL	LOW
BROOKSTAR POND	LOW
CLEAR WATER WOODS	HIGH
FOURTEEN MILE CREEK	LOW
MERCHANTS TRAIL 2	MEDIUM
MORRISON VALLEY NORTH UMR	MEDIUM
MUNNS CREEK TRAIL 4	MEDIUM
SHANNON CREEK TRAIL	HIGH
SHANNON CREEK TRAIL 2	HIGH
SHANNON CREEK TRAIL 4	HIGH
VALLEYRIDGE POND	LOW
BIRCHTREE TRAIL	MEDIUM
BROOK VALLEY PARK	MEDIUM
CLEARVIEW WOODS	MEDIUM
COLBORNE PARK	HIGH
CORNWALL ROAD BUFFER	LOW
CORVAL TRAIL/OLD ABBEY PARK	MEDIUM
DUNVEGAN PARK	MEDIUM
EAST FOURTEEN MILE CREEK	LOW
EAST FOURTEEN MILE CREEK TRAIL	LOW
EAST JOSHUA	MEDIUM
FISKIN PROPERTY	LOW
FOURTEEN MILE CREEK TRAIL 2	LOW
INDIAN RIDGE TRAIL	MEDIUM
JOSHUA VALLEY PARK / MAPLEGROVE PARK	MEDIUM
MUNNS CREEK TRAIL 3	LOW
NAUTICAL WOODS	HIGH
NIPEGON TRAIL	HIGH
PELEE WOODS PARK	HIGH
SHELL PARK	HIGH
SHERIDAN HILLS	LOW

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SHERIDAN HILLS	LOW
SHERIDAN HILLS 2	MEDIUM
DONOVAN BAILEY PARK	LOW

- (1) 'High' operational impact means that standard logging equipment needs to be used because of the relatively high concentration of dead/dying ash and other tree species to be removed. The park is expected to be closed during the forest operations for public safety.
- (2) "Medium" visual impact means a combination of 1 and 3. The Park may or may not be required to be closed.
- (3) "Low" operational impact means tree removal at a single tree removal is anticipated using a Tree Service firm. The park is not expected to be closed although certain trails may be closed due to the work.

The anticipated order for this work is High, Medium then Low impact properties. The full scope of the 2014 Woodlands Conservation Program is subject to final tender pricing which, is not yet finalized. Final tender pricing may affect the total number of Park Properties included in 2014 program. The other consideration is weather and ground conditions. In many instances cold weather and frost is required for the logging to not impact the woodlot, and dry weather is necessary during summer operations. Hence optimal weather conditions are required. If the preceding list cannot be completed, work will continue into 2015.

A map illustrating the 2014 Woodlands Conservation Program is appended to this report along with greater detailed information about each park property can be found in Appendix A. A map showing each park can be found in Appendix B.

Prior to closing the first round of park properties, an EAB public meeting will take place; it is scheduled for the evening of Wednesday, January 22nd at Town Hall. Invitations will be sent to all residents who live near affected park properties as well as notification to the broader community around each site. Other public meetings may be required due to the number of woodlots.

In addition to ash trees, other trees that are identified as either structurally unsound and/or are over-crowding the forest and causing stagnation of proper forest health will be selected for removal as identified in a silvicultural prescription for the each of the forest compartments located within each of the 34 parks; this document is written by a Registered Professional Forester and is used to guide forest management activities. In following this sustainable forest management approach the town will be able to expand the number of properties that are "certified sustainable" by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) - an internationally recognized forest stewardship program. Currently three town properties are so

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certified: Iroquois Shoreline Woods Park, Bayshire Woods Park and Winston Woods Park. In order to accomplish this initiative, staff propose to update the Memorandum of Understanding the town signed with the Eastern Ontario Model Forest in 2004 to include all woodland park properties in the town (Appendix C). Certified parks would be eligible to display the FSC sign which is included as Appendix D.

Ash Tree Replacement Program

A total of 344 ash trees were replaced during 2013 through spring and fall planting as follows:

Town Roads – 170
Regional Roads – 31
Active Parks- 143

The 2013 replacement program was delayed as staff focused greater efforts on ash tree removal. Originally approximately 500 trees were planned for removal, but based on ongoing monitoring, and responding to concerns expressed by the public, a larger number of trees were removed than originally expected. This has delayed the replacement program, which has also been complicated by vendor delays in stumping. Across the GTA vendors are becoming increasingly busy with EAB work, as well as delays in utility locate clearances that are required for stumping. A greater effort has been made in the fall of 2013 to remove EAB stumps so the trees removed in 2013, will be replanted in spring/fall 2014.

While there was a delay in replanting removed ash trees, Forestry staff did undertake a significant tree planting program in 2013. Over 1000 trees were planted on town and regional roads to grow the town's tree canopy using Council approved capital funds targeted at a canopy expansion program. This was accompanied by a park tree replacement program that planted 395 trees.

EAB Monitoring Program

For the fourth successive year the town's EAB consultant, BioForest Technologies Inc. installed and monitored the green leaf volatile trap program consisting of approximately 100 traps spread across the town on a grid system. Through biweekly monitoring it is expected that the EAB population decline that is predicted will be documented which will provide the data for accuracy in determining when to begin decreasing the intensity/frequency of the Ash Tree Treatment Program. This data will also be used to produce an updated EAB delimitation map - a map showing the 'footprint' of the insect in Oakville.

Community Engagement Program

Community engagement has been critical in raising awareness of EAB and educating the public about ash tree treatment and removal and replacement options. It became increasingly important in 2013 as ash tree mortality increased and forestry professionals warned that this year could be the last chance an effective treatment program could begin before trees became too infested to be saved. An updated, aggressive communications campaign was undertaken to encourage private ash tree owners to treat their trees. The town's website, social media, Oakville Transit bus and transit shelter advertising, posters and message boards within town facilities, full-page ads in local papers, and participation in community events have all been used with a high degree of success in providing public awareness and engagement. The full 2013 EAB Communications plan is appended as Appendix E.

Key 2013 performance indicators on community engagement include:

- Oakville's very successful Canopy Club social media campaign:
As of September 30, 2013 the number of Facebook followers increased 34 per cent since 2012. The number of Twitter followers increased 45 per cent.
- Spikes in the total number of page views of all EAB/Canopy Club web pages were seen during the summer treatment promotion campaign:
 - 130 per cent increase in June (when bus and transit shelter promos began) (2,634 in 2013, up from 1,145 in June 2012)
 - 81 per cent increase in August (during newspaper ad campaign) (1,548 in 2013, up from 851 in Aug. 2012)
- Between May 25 and August 30, QR codes on transit shelters received 28 scans.
- Between April and September 2013, the EAB campaign received ongoing media coverage with 28 known print / online articles, posts.
- TruGreen (the town's treatment service provider) saw a 90 per cent increase in the number of privately owned tree treatments this year: 97 in 2013 compared to 51 in 2012. Of the 97 clients, TruGreen reported 72 were treating for the first time.

CONSIDERATIONS:**(A) PUBLIC**

The public is aware of EAB and the town's EAB management program through a comprehensive community engagement program.

(B) FINANCIAL

There are no financial implications in this report. The 2014 Woodlands Conservation program is a component of the overall 2014 EAB capital budget.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

This report has been prepared with the assistance of the Strategy, Policy and Communications Department.

(D) CORPORATE AND/OR DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal to:

- enhance our natural environment
- have environmentally sustainable programs/services

(E) COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

Ash represents about 9.6% of Oakville's urban forest canopy cover. While the town is taking a very proactive approach to EAB and mitigating the impact on municipal properties, the impact on ecological services such as pollution reduction and energy savings that is provided by ash trees is greatly dependent on the participation of private ash tree owners. The primary goal of the Community Engagement Program is to inform and educate the community with respect to EAB and how they can assist by treating their ash tree or removing their non-treated ash tree and planting a replacement tree for the sustainability of the community and Oakville tree canopy.

APPENDICES:

- Appendix A – Town Map illustrating the 2014 Woodlands Conservation Project
- Appendix B – Individual Maps of Parks in 2014 Woodlands Conservation Project
- Appendix C- Memorandum of Understanding, Eastern Ontario Model Forest
- Appendix D – Example of a sign for parks included in the FSC Program
- Appendix E – 2013 EAB Communications Plan

Prepared by:

John McNeil
Manager of Forestry

Submitted by:

Chris Mark
Director, Parks and Open Space