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## Department of Environmental Protection Begins Removal of Trees Affected by Emerald Ash Borer

**Project Seeks to Limit the Impact of the Invasive Beetle by Removing Roughly 2,000 Ash Trees Around Ashokan Reservoir**

**Photos of the Work are Posted on [DEP's Flickr page](#)**

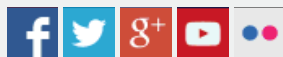
The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today announced the start of a forestry project alongside Ashokan Reservoir that aims to limit the impact of the emerald ash borer, an invasive beetle native to Asia, by removing some 2,000 ash trees from land just north of the reservoir. The project will also enhance public safety by removing infested trees that could fall, and it will promote forest regeneration by thinning the canopy and allowing sunlight to reach the forest floor. Projects to manage and improve forests around New York City's reservoirs are important for water quality because healthy trees prevent erosion and serve as a natural filter.

The emerald ash borer (EAB) – a metallic green beetle that is smaller than a penny – was first discovered near the Ashokan Reservoir watershed in 2010. Trees affected by EAB were first discovered on water supply lands around the reservoir in 2012. The beetles' larvae kill ash trees by eating through the vessels just below the bark that carry nutrients through the trunk of the tree. As they eat through this layer of wood, the larvae leave snake-like patterns known as "galleries." The beetle only affects ash trees, and most die within two to four years of being infested. EAB is estimated to have killed some 50 million ash trees across the country since 2002, when it was first discovered in Michigan.

**More Information**

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EAB only fly about one-half mile from the tree they emerge from, but they often move much greater distances through shipments of firewood and nursery trees. That's why the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation issued a quarantine and expanded regulations for moving firewood shortly after the first infestations were found. Information on the recently expanded quarantine area and other state rules related to EAB can be found by [clicking here](#). Because there is no method for eradicating EAB, control efforts thus far have concentrated on slowing their spread by removing ash trees from areas infested by the beetle.

DEP has moved to limit the impact of EAB on water supply lands by removing trees from a 200-acre area just north of Ashokan Reservoir, near the hamlet of Shokan. Work on the site began in February and is expected to be finished by the end of the year. Most ash trees that will be removed as part of the forestry project have already been infested by EAB. By removing them before they fall and rot, DEP and a local timber company hope to preserve their value. Ash trees are often used for baseball bats, tool handles, furniture and flooring. Some trees will also be used for firewood. The harvest of timber from Ashokan Reservoir is being done by J & J Log and Lumber Corporation, which employs 200 Hudson Valley and Catskills residents at its facilities in Dutchess and Columbia counties.

Removing trees infested by EAB is also important for public safety, since dead ash trees are potentially more prone to falling. This is an important consideration for the forest near Shokan, which is used by many fishermen and hunters. In addition to roughly 2,000 ash trees, the forestry project will also include the harvest of 2,000 trees of other species, many of which are a century old or older.

The removal of these trees is part of a multifaceted strategy to encourage forest regeneration around Ashokan Reservoir. Removing old trees and opening up the canopy will allow sunlight to reach the forest floor and encourage the growth of a new, diverse forest. DEP will also remove invasive plants such as common buckthorn and Japanese barberry, which often take over the forest floor and stifle the growth of new trees. Last year, DEP also administered a number of deer management assistance permits that allowed hunters to access new lands around Ashokan Reservoir and harvest a limited number of antlerless deer. Reducing the deer population will also promote the growth of a healthy and diverse forest because grazing deer often eat saplings before they have a chance to mature.

DEP takes extra precautions to ensure that timber harvesting does not adversely affect water quality. Forestry projects include best management practices to protect water quality, and DEP staff members inspect the worksites regularly to ensure erosion controls are functioning properly. The use of heavy equipment is often suspended during heavy rain and other wet conditions to avoid rutting and erosion. Some sites have also included silt fences, seeding, and other efforts to prevent suspended sediments from reaching the reservoirs.

DEP is aiming to harvest more standing timber across the watersheds to meet standards of good forest stewardship, and to maximize the use and value of this important natural resource. In 2011, DEP completed its first ever comprehensive forest management plan for City-owned land in the watersheds. Under the plan, DEP inventoried forest conditions across its lands, and developed a prioritized approach to undertake forest management projects, with a goal of increasing the acres treated on an annual basis. DEP foresters have prioritized areas for future timber harvests across the watersheds by looking at forest attributes such as age, density, and overall effect on the water supply.

DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents, including 8.3 million in New York City, and residents of Ulster, Orange, Putnam, and Westchester counties. This water comes from the Catskill, Delaware, and Croton watersheds that extend more than 125 miles from the City, and the system comprises 19 reservoirs, three controlled lakes, and numerous tunnels and aqueducts. DEP employs nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 scientists, engineers,

surveyors, watershed maintainers and others professionals in the upstate watershed. In addition to its \$68 million payroll and \$157 million in annual taxes paid in upstate counties, DEP has invested more than \$1.5 billion in watershed protection programs—including partnership organizations such as the Catskill Watershed Corporation and the Watershed Agricultural Council—that support sustainable farming practices, environmentally sensitive economic development, and local economic opportunity. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program with over \$14 billion in investments planned over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit [www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep), like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/nycwater](http://www.facebook.com/nycwater), or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/nycwater](http://www.twitter.com/nycwater).

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