

CLA



VIEWS

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President's Letter

By Bob Bishop

It has been a busy year for the Catskill Landowners Association as we continue our work on a number of "action items," or pressing issues and threats to the long-term stewardship of private forestland.

Most recently, all members should have received in the mail position statements drafted by the CLA Board of Directors on three issues of importance to Catskill landowners: gas drilling; development and hamlet extension.

The following are excerpts from those statements:

Gas Drilling

CLA views natural gas exploration and development as a right vested in land ownership and support appropriate regulation of this activity in order to protect our water systems and the scenic beauty of the Catskill region. CLA opposes any suggested regulation that would impose a general ban on natural gas drilling on private property within the Catskills region unless the landowners receive just compensation for the loss of this property right.

Development

CLA opposes residential and resort development on ridgelines and slopes that would dramatically impair aesthetic values of the Catskills.

Hamlet Extension

Some town supervisors have proposed to extend the territory covered by their hamlets in order to prevent further land acquisition by the City of New York (either in fee or through conservation easement) within the watershed. Arbitrary hamlet extension by town boards and supervisors, without the prior approval of all landowners affected thereby, is an assault

on landowning rights that is contrary to law and equity.

Each position statement includes a section for members to either agree or disagree with the statements and to provide comments. If you have not done so already, please complete the survey and return it in the enclosed self-address, stamped envelope included in the mailing. Your comments are critical to CLA's mission and to its commitment to understanding and meeting the needs and concerns of its membership.

I also encourage all members to supply CLA with an e-mail address for us to contact you and keep you apprised of urgent issues that may require your immediate attention. You can also keep an eye on our Web site for regular updates at www.catskill-landowners.org.

Thank you for your continued support and I look forward to a productive year ahead. ♡

Emerald Ash Borer—What is being done and how to prepare for its arrival.

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is here in New York now.

Please don't panic by harvesting all of your ash trees in anticipation. Let's learn from what other states are doing that have been experiencing this infestation—what has been effective and what has not. Ash is not a highly valuable tree and it would not take much to flood what little market we now have for this species... And, the trees will certainly die if they are cut!

EAB (*Agrillus planipennis* Fairmaire) is a nonnative insect that will infest and kill any type of ash tree (*Fraxinus* spp.). It is believed that it was introduced to North America from eastern Asia in ash wood

used for stabilizing cargo in ships or for packing or crating heavy consumer products. It arrived as early as 1990, but went undetected until its population built up to damaging levels in Detroit, MI, and Windsor, Ontario, in June of 2002.

It has since been discovered in 12 more states: Ohio, Maryland and Virginia in 2003, Indiana in 2004, Illinois in 2006, Pennsylvania and West Virginia in 2007, Wisconsin and Missouri in 2008 and Kentucky, Minnesota and New York in 2009.

Almost without exception each state started out with an eradication program of cutting down every ash tree within ½ mile of any discovered infestation. The idea behind this was that by cutting down all ash trees within the distance of the natural spread of the insect, and chipping them up to less than an inch to destroy the larvae living beneath the bark, that it would stop its natural spread. This can help deter the natural spread if done correctly in small isolated outbreaks. Remember that this insect is in the twigs as well as small branches and trunks. This requires whole tree harvesting and chipping and a safe way to dispose of the material such as wood-burning facilities. This is an expensive program, hard to orchestrate with many small ownerships and is only somewhat effective. With all of the absentee landowners in the Catskill region it would even be harder. It is not enough to stop EAB completely. It will continue to spread—mostly by the transport done by humans.

The beetle does not spread quickly on its own. Most states are putting their primary focus on preventing the movement of potentially infested articles such as firewood, nursery stock, wood chips, pulpwood and logs. This is done by set-

ting up quarantines to effectively eliminate the transport of potentially infested material out of the area where the insect was discovered. Typically the entire county in which it is discovered is included and if it is found within a mile or so of an adjoining county, that one is also included.

Michigan, Ontario, Ohio, Maryland, Indiana and Illinois are all not using federal funds any longer to eliminate every ash tree, infested or not within a half mile radius of the discovery site. Pennsylvania still has a policy of doing so, but if the beetle spreads, (and it most likely will) it is doubtful that they will continue.

In mid June of 2009, New York made its first discovery of EAB in the town of Randolph, Cattaraugus County. An entomologist made the sighting just off Exit 16 of State Route 17/I-86.

Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis said in a press release announcing the discovery, "This is yet another wake-up call for all New Yorkers that invasive species pose a grave threat to the health of our natural resources and ecosystems, and ultimately, our economy. Tough but practical measures, such as quarantines, firewood regulations, public education and other regulatory actions will continue to be needed if we are to limit the damage from EAB and other invasives." No one has said what the "other regulatory actions" might be or if any are contemplated.

The DEC and Department of Ag & Markets (DAM) almost immediately announced a quarantine. New York's order prohibits

the movement of regulated articles within and beyond Cattaraugus and Chautauqua counties without certification or compliance agreements issued by DAM. The state order also restricts the movement of the regulated wood products into or through the quarantine district by requiring several provisions including, but not limited to documentation listing the origin and destination of shipments, and prohibiting transporters from unnecessarily stopping while traveling through the quarantine district. The full order is posted on the DEC website.

As a basic requirement of the intrastate regulation, all individuals, companies or facilities handling ash timber products and/or processing other uncertified green ash products, or chips, bark and firewood of any species, will be required to enter into a compliance agreement with either NYS DAM or The United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. A compliance agreement is a written agreement between a regulating agency and a person handling or receiving regulated articles, which authorizes the restricted movement, processing, handling or utilization of these articles. The full order is posted on the DEC website.

New York has begun a full-scale education program, restricted the movement of firewood and implemented early detection and quarantine strategies. These are the same tactics that states, which have been dealing with EAB, have found to be the most effective. If NYS does decide to remove trees they will be doing it with the proper authority to

do so and any attempt to stop them in court will be costly and most likely will be unsuccessful. But, again, most states have decided that it is too costly and not very effective on a large scale.

The fact is, the insect is here and work is being done to develop a biological control. In the meantime, all states' efforts are to slow the spread of EAB. The biggest culprit in its spread is the human.

Landowners should not make knee-jerk reactions to this situation. There are many things to consider before taking any action. The two websites that are mentioned in this article is the best place to start—along with calling The Catskill Forest Association. (845-586-3054). 🐿

This article was contributed by the Catskill Forest Association.

CLA Welcomes James Cruickshank

James Cruickshank has joined CLA as a board member. He has 25 years experience in land management, forestry, forestland products and construction. James has worked on construction and sustainable holding projects on a bicoastal and international basis.

CLA would like to thank Patty Cullen for her work as a CLA Board Member. We wish Patty good luck in her future endeavors. 🐿

www.catskilllandowners.org

Margaretville, NY 12455

PO Box 1188

Catskill Landowners Association

