



City of Saint Paul, Minnesota

Emerald Ash Borer Management Program 2024 Annual Report Future Recommendations

The City of Saint Paul's (the City) EAB Management Program began in 2010, making 2024 year fifteen of EAB management in the city. However, as it has been estimated to have arrived as early as 2004, next year will mark the twenty-first year of EAB's existence in our city. Recognizing this complete timeframe has been fundamental in understanding the progression of the EAB infestation and implementing management needs. The Structured Removal program concluded in 2024, however individual ash removals continue to take place on both public parkland/open space and private property.

Officials who have dealt with EAB infestations elsewhere have warned that it is a fast-paced event, lasting perhaps 10-20 years, before 100% tree mortality is reached. The spread of EAB in Saint Paul has trailed behind projected curves in terms of ash tree mortality rates, however it still means the loss of all ash trees not treated with insecticides, including approximately 27,000 (ca 2009) on city streets, and thousands more on both public parkland/open space and private property. It has required that the City be prepared to handle a glut of dying trees in a short timeframe or suffer the consequences of thousands of dead and potentially hazardous trees in the landscape.

This document summarizes management events of 2024 along with recommendations for continued EAB management going forward.



The temporary funding partnership with the Saint Paul Port Authority that began in 2022 gave the City the ability to temporarily expedite the timeline for stump grinding and replanting, and to address backlogs in certain areas created by the resource demand of EAB management.

These funds created the opportunity for the City to have the remaining ash tree removals on city streets and their stump grinding completed by the end of 2024, with replanting following within one year. Saint Paul Forestry successfully completed public right-of-way ash removals and their stump grinding in 2024. Some tree replanting occurred in 2024, with the remainder to be completed in Spring 2025. Some ash trees remain on public property, but only if they are under an active treatment schedule.

Inventory

A basic knowledge of conditions of the urban forest, i.e. an up-to-date inventory, was required to direct management needs and goals in terms of the EAB infestation. This information became of increasing importance as the City faced liability issues with remaining ash trees. Since the ash removals have been completed, the inventory has been updated and that liability has been mitigated.

The City of Saint Paul receives dozens of claims for damage caused by publicly owned trees every year, many of which were for ash trees that lose branches or completely fail (ash species quickly become brittle and are prone to failure upon decline and death). As ash mortality increased due to EAB infestation, such claims increased until the removal of those trees was completed. Thus, it is imperative that comprehensive tree inventory records are kept not only to coordinate ash tree management, but also to document calls and work history for use when reviewing risk management claims.

2024/2025 Recommendations—Inventory:

- **Continue real-time updating of boulevard and park trees as work is performed.**
- **Continue real-time updating of boulevard and park trees as previously un-inventoried or previously incorrectly inventoried ash are discovered.**

Monitoring/Inspection

Routine monitoring and inspections played a vital role in extending the timeframe for EAB management. Coupled with sanitation, it is likely those efforts significantly influenced the delay in tree mortality in Saint Paul. Monitoring in recent years has confirmed that the EAB infestation has now spread to 100% of the city.

It is important to note that without additional increases in EAB management staff from 2010-2024, providing inspections of privately owned ash trees became impossible as EAB progressed across the city. In lieu of providing requested inspections for property owners, from 2019-2024 City staff performed an annual city-wide inspection of all right-of-way ash trees during the growing season. The department became fully staffed at the turn of the new year and have been able to respond to private property ash tree issues with increased frequency and quicker response times.

The City being considered 100% infested includes both publicly owned ash trees and private property trees, and those private property trees that remain will begin to fail if property owners do not proactively deal with their removal. It is a forgone conclusion that the City will increasingly enforce its dangerous tree ordinance moving forward as dead ash trees become increasingly dangerous and pose potential hazards to adjacent properties, both public and private.

Future Recommendations—Monitoring/Inspection:

- **The removal of public ash trees has been completed - the annual city-wide inspection of remaining public ash trees should be discontinued.**
- **Continue to update treatment records and determine removal of declining ash trees.**
- **Increase staff management of dead/declining ash trees on private property that would meet the conditions of the City's ordinance for dangerous trees.**
- **Continue to update records for previously un-inventoried or incorrectly inventoried ash trees.**

Removals

Structured Removal

Structured Removal (SR) was the systematic removal of entire blocks of ash trees throughout the city. It was designed as an economically advantageous program—the necessity of revisiting the same street repeatedly over consecutive years to remove individual ash trees is eliminated; tree and stump removal is faster and therefore less costly; tree replacement is more efficient. 2024 saw the completion of our Structured Removal program – all ash trees within the program have been removed.



Construction-related Removals

In 2010, the Parks and Recreation and Public Works Departments began working together to create efficiencies in street construction projects where ash trees existed. Over the past fifteen years, nearly 2,250 ROW ash trees have been removed prior to street reconstruction, later replaced with a more diverse selection of trees. This program has worked well as major street construction has detrimental impacts to the health of mature trees, and while tree loss can dramatically change the streetscape, it has become an accepted practice in Saint Paul to proactively remove and replace these trees during construction projects.

Individual Removals

As SR efforts clear large blocks of ash, the City continued to monitor and remove individual ash as needed. Those ash that are only among a small number on any given block, or those that are the only ash on their block, were not included in the SR efforts, but rather monitored and removed if necessary, on a case by case basis. These individual ash were failing in large numbers and were completely removed in 2022. Forestry then completed the removal of SR blocks in 2024.

Removals Near Overhead Utilities

Working in conjunction with Xcel Energy, the City has prioritized the removal of all boulevard ash in potential conflict with power lines. The removal of the final 50 ash tree removals was completed 2024.

Park Removals

Trees growing in managed open-space are prioritized over those in unmanaged wooded areas, however ash growing in wood-lines that could potentially impact managed areas, paths, or roadways were addressed in 2024.

The City continued efforts to remove ash throughout the park system, including removals along Shepard Road, within Crosby Farm Regional Park, Griggs Park, Orchard Park, Linwood Recreation Center and at several golf courses in 2024 and 2025.

Since 2011, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has been utilizing biological controls in the form of parasitic wasps to help combat EAB. The tiny, non-stinging wasps have been released along the river corridor and in other natural areas with the hope that they will help to stabilize the EAB population so that it does not reach the expected explosive growth it is capable of.



More information on that program can be found at:

<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/plants/pestmanagement/eab/eabbiocontrol.aspx>.

2024 ash removal numbers include:

- 2,291 total ash trees removed from city ROW's and Parks (*YTD Total = 31,759*)
 - 1,530 ROW ash trees (*YTD total ROW ash removed = 26,932*)
 - 761 Park ash trees (*YTD total Park ash removed = 4,827*)

Future Recommendations—Removals:

- **Monitor all remaining publicly owned ash trees along streets and remove if necessary.**
- **On parkland, within budget capacity, remove all untreated ash trees.**
- **Continue to employ creative management options for infested trees in certain areas, e.g., use of grants, partner organizations, and volunteers.**

Insecticide Treatment

The City's goal for insecticide treatments of public trees was to reduce EAB populations to extend the timeframe to complete ash removals and replanting on public property. Following an outreach campaign in 2021 to alert residents of the discontinuation of city provided treatment, 2022 saw the last treatments applied, and that program has been discontinued. All remaining ash trees previously treated by the City, and where property owners have not elected to continue treatment via the permit process, were removed in 2024. Some select specimen park ash trees will continue to be treated as new tree canopy within the park is developed.

Forestry uses various insecticides with active ingredient emamectin benzoate – a non-neonicotinoid – administered through trunk injection (versus a soil drench or other methods). Injecting the chemical directly into the tree is meant to reduce exposure of the pesticide to other non-target organisms. Insecticide treatments must be repeated at a regular interval of every 2 years to ensure survivability from EAB. Ash trees treated by the City have an aluminum tag attached to them with the most recent year of treatment, e.g., "ST PAUL, EAB, 2020". Those tags will be removed as the trees are removed.

2024 ash treatment numbers include:

- 0 ROW ash trees treated (program was discontinued in 2022):
 - 109 Park ash trees in continued treatment – due for next treatment in 2026
- 310 ROW ash treated by adjacent property owner through permit process

Future Recommendations—Insecticide Treatment:

- Continue treatment of 112 Park ash trees using emamectin benzoate.
- Continue administering permits to adjacent property owners who wish to keep their public boulevard ash trees in continued treatment.
- Continue inspecting all public boulevard ash trees to ensure treatments are being completed by the adjacent property owners on schedule.

Reforestation

Reforestation of the city with a diverse palette of young trees is the primary objective in preserving the vibrancy of our urban forest while reducing the chance of future widespread tree loss events. While it is impossible to avoid the introduction of new pests and diseases, refraining from monoculture planting schemes can help to reduce their potential devastating impacts.

Since the EAB Management Program began, the goal for reforestation has been to replace every ash tree removed at a 1:1 ratio. Planting of ash replacement trees on Structured Removal blocks, in parks and construction areas, and through the citywide tree planting program all took place in 2024 (see below). Continued partnerships with groups such as Mississippi Park Connection and Tree Trust have helped to increase plantings city-wide. These numbers do not include the thousands of smaller trees (*mostly seedlings or saplings*) planted in park natural areas through the Environmental Services unit of the Natural Resources Section.

Future Recommendations—Reforestation:

- **Seek out ways to increase planting numbers city-wide.**
- **Continue to use mixed planting schemes and a diverse palette of tree species.**
- **Continue natural resource related planting projects in parks to off-set the loss of ash trees.**
- **Increase planting in parks with less expensive containerized and bare root gravel bed trees as a replacement for ash removed from system.**



Outreach

Since the Structured Removal program was completed in 2024, the need for general EAB related outreach has drastically declined. Outreach going forward will shift away aggressive and pro-active towards informational and reactive, leaning heavily on private property management and ordinance enforcement.

Emerald ash borer information was and remains primarily disseminated to residents via the internet:

- www.stpaul.gov/forestry (main Forestry web page with links to EAB)
- www.stpaul.gov/EAB (bypasses the main Forestry web page and takes you directly to EAB)

The City has also utilized the following to inform the public on EAB:

- EAB website (www.stpaul.gov/eab)
 - [EAB FAQ sheet](#)
 - [Interactive Boulevard Ash Tree Management Map](#)
 - "Emerald Ash Borer Management in Saint Paul" video
 - Compilation of links to additional resources
- Direct mail postcards (photo to right)
- Community newspapers
- Social media: Facebook: [Saint Paul Natural Resources](#) Instagram: [@SaintPaulNaturalResources](#)
- City Council & District Council offices
- Door Hangers
- Staff attendance at various public meetings, workshops, and events



The [Homeowner's Guide to Emerald Ash Borer](#) is available with up-to-date information on how to identify ash trees and management strategies available. Unfortunately, there are very few options—treatment or removal/replacement, and as trees become more infested the treatment option becomes less viable. Unmanaged ash trees left in the landscape will succumb to EAB and will potentially pose a safety risk to individual properties, adjacent properties, or the public. Therefore, the "do nothing" or "wait and see" approach is not recommended.

Future Recommendations - Outreach:

- **Upon request, attend community meetings to present information on EAB.**
- **Expand Tree Steward efforts and programs to include planting and maintaining young city trees as well as private property trees.**
- **Expand efforts to assist residents with information in dealing with private property ash trees, including guidance on pesticide use, or removal and replacement tree planting.**