

STATE

# DEC steps up fight vs. ash borer

By George M. Walsh  
Associated Press

New York has expanded a quarantine on ash wood products across much of upstate to slow the spread of the invasive emerald ash borer.

The beetle's larvae have destroyed tens of millions of trees as it has moved steadily east from Michigan, where it was first discovered in 2002.

State environmental regulators have banned untreated firewood from entering New York and forbidden moving it more than 50 miles from its source within the state since 2008 as they have tried to hinder the beetle and other pests.

They also imposed local quarantines regulating movement of ash products by loggers and other forest product businesses.

On Wednesday, regulators replaced the local quarantines with a single ban covering all or parts of 42 counties from western New York to the New England border.

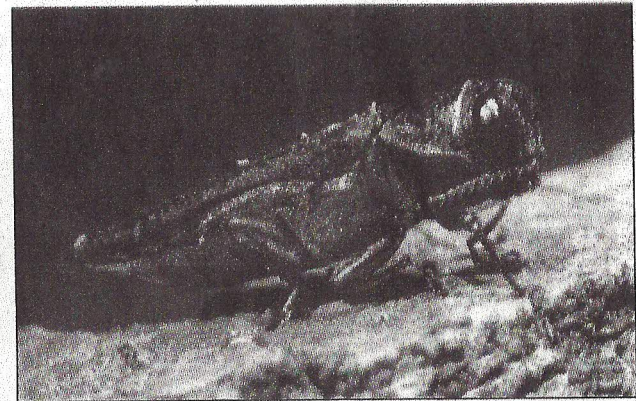
That includes Steuben, Chemung and Schuyler counties. There are multiple emerald ash borer infestations in northeast Steuben County, according to the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

The Adirondacks, other parts of the North Country, New York City, and Rockland, Westchester, Nassau and Suffolk counties aren't included in the ban.

The DEC said newly discovered infestations added a number of counties to the list and helped drive the decision to create a blanket quarantine.

Eric Carlson, executive director of the Empire State Forest Products Association, said Thursday that the industry worked with state and federal regulators to unify the ban, which he said eliminates a patchwork that made it more complicated for

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companies to comply with the rules for handling logs and bark.

He said the infestations are widespread, but cover a relatively small part of the state's ash stands. Companies like True Temper and Rawlings Sporting Goods haven't had a problem getting wood for their garden tool handles and baseball bats, he said.

Loggers can't move ash during the insect's summer flying season and infested logs can be used, but the

bark must be put through grinders twice to make sure the beetle larvae are destroyed.

"It's unfortunate that the pest is moving faster than the scientists expected," Carlson said, noting that all the states around New York now have confirmed infestations.

Researchers have been using a variety of techniques in efforts to combat the borer, including establishing colonies of predatory wasps from China that attack the larvae. The first beetles are believed to have arrived in shipping material from China.

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