U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

News Release

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Arkansas' 10 National Wildlife Refuges Prohibit all Imported Firewood to Protect Forest from Invasive Species

A recent finding by the Arkansas State Plant Board and the United States Department of Agriculture indicates that the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), an invasive beetle that is highly destructive to ash trees, has been found in several Arkansas counties. Precautionary measures are now underway to prevent the spread of the EAB throughout the state including a 25-county quarantine zone in southern and southwestern Arkansas. Three of the ten National Wildlife Refuges Arkansas are located within the quarantine zone. Precautionary measures are now underway to prevent the spread of the EAB throughout the state. Effective immediately, firewood will no longer be allowed to be imported on any National Wildlife Refuge in Arkansas until further notice. The three refuges within the quarantine zone (Felsenthal, Overflow, and Pond Creek) will also suspend firewood cutting permits for home heating purposes. For the refuges that allow camping, the following conditions apply: 1) individuals may collect downed trees/logs/limbs no more than 100 feet from roads and trails open to motorized vehicles, 2) it is prohibited to damage standing trees and/ or habitat, 3) on public roads all debris must be removed from the road, shoulders, and ditches, 4) all vehicles including ATV/UTVs must remain on designated roads or trails, 5) all refuge regulations apply and will be strictly enforced.

"First and foremost, it is our priority to protect our forests and wildlife resources from such threats" says Michael Stroeh, Project Leader of South Arkansas Refuges Complex, "Cooperative efforts from both the state and federal levels to prohibit imported firewood and quarantine unaffected areas of the state is crucial at such time."

The adult emerald ash borer is a metallic green insect about one-half inch long and one-eighth inch wide making it hard to detect in the wild. The female beetles lay eggs on the bark of ash trees. The eggs hatch and the larvae bore into the bark to the fluid-conducting vessels underneath. The larvae feed and develop, cutting off the flow of nutrients and, eventually killing the tree. EAB attacks and kills North American species of true ash, and tree death occurs three to five years following initial infestation. EAB is native to Asia.

Signs of EAB include: canopy dieback beginning at the top of the tree and progressing through the year until the tree is bare; sprouts growing from the roots and trunk; split bark with an S-shape gallery; D-shaped exit holes; and more woodpecker activity, creating large holes as they extract the larvae. Firewood is a vehicle for movement of tree-killing forest pests.

For more information about Emerald Ash Borer, visit:

www.emeraldashborer.info

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The National Wildlife Refuge System protects wildlife and wildlife habitat on more than 150 million acres of land and water from the Caribbean to the Pacific, Maine to Alaska. Refuges also improve human health, provide outdoor recreation and support local economies. Visit our homepage at www.fws.gov/refuges. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

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