

NEWS RELEASE



U.S. MAPLE SYRUP INDUSTRY AT RISK

The Asian longhorned beetle could put an end to an American staple at the breakfast table

ARLINGTON, Va., Feb. 22, 2012 - As winter begins to wane, the maple sugaring season begins in the Northeast and the Midwest. The centuries-old tradition of tapping maple trees for sap to make syrup is threatened by the spread of the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB), which kills maple trees and travels on infested firewood. Because these beetles are not native to this continent, they have no effective natural predators, and native trees have no resistance to their tunneling and chewing.

ALB infestations have occurred in several maple syrup-producing states. The most recent infestation, which threatens the Midwest, was found in June 2011 near Cincinnati, Ohio. Eradication efforts are underway, including the tragic but necessary removal of many mature maple trees. The infestation of ALB discovered in the Worcester, MA area in August 2008 poses a particularly serious threat to New England's maples, because of the large area the beetles had infested before being discovered. Earlier infestations of the beetle were found in both New York and New Jersey, but the beetle is believed to be under control in those two states. Throughout the region, state officials are vigilant for new infestations.

"Because some people don't realize that moving firewood can spread this tree-killing beetle, more infestations may be discovered in other cities and towns in maple-producing areas," said Leigh Greenwood, *Don't Move Firewood* campaign manager, The Nature Conservancy. "Once an infestation occurs, the only way to stop the Asian longhorned beetle's spread is to cut down all the infested and host trees – impacting property owners and local communities and posing a huge threat to the maple syrup industry."

While these pests cannot move far on their own, when people move firewood that harbors them, they unwittingly enable these pests to start an infestation far from their current range. A visual inspection cannot easily detect these pests since they can be hidden in the layers of wood beneath the bark.

"It might seem like a good idea to obtain some firewood from another area, or to take along firewood when going camping, but just one log can start a new infestation of the Asian longhorned beetle or other tree-killing pests," said Greenwood. "By buying locally harvested wood, people can help protect their trees by not risking the accidental movement of insects and diseases that can affect entire forests."

"Ongoing efforts in awareness and education about invasive insects and the Don't Move Firewood message are very important. We want to stress as an industry that the potential loss from Asian longhorned beetle will far exceed the upfront costs of prevention," said Dave Chapeskie, executive director of the International Maple Syrup Institute. "Other invasive insects like the emerald ash borer threaten the integrity of the sugar bush, even if they don't directly threaten the sugar maples."

Following are tips from the *Don't Move Firewood* campaign:

- Obtain firewood near the location where you will burn it – that means the wood was cut in a nearby forest, in the same county, or a maximum of 50 miles from where you'll have your fire.
- Don't be tempted to bring firewood home just because the wood looks clean and healthy. It could still harbor tiny insect eggs or microscopic fungal spores that could start a new and deadly infestation of forest pests.
- Aged or seasoned wood is not considered safe to move, but commercially kiln-dried wood is a good option if you must transport firewood.
- If you have already moved firewood, and you need to dispose of it safely, burn it soon and completely. Make sure to rake the storage area carefully and also burn the debris. In the future, buy from a local source.
- Take care to respect all state and local regulations on firewood movement – some areas are subject to serious fines for violations. For more information, visit your state agricultural department's web site: <http://www.rma.usda.gov/other/stateag.html>.
- Tell your friends and others about the risks of moving firewood – no one wants to be responsible for starting a new pest infestation.

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To learn more about how to prevent forest pests from destroying forests, log onto www.dontmovefirewood.org.

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. The Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 18 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 117 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Visit us on the Web at www.nature.org.