

Tree Warden Notes

October 10, 2012 to December 11, 2012

October 23rd

I emailed a map and addresses of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) sightings in the Brattleboro area as of August 8, 2012 to all Tree Board members and Brattleboro Forest Pest First Detectors. I also sent the email to VT State Forest, Parks, and Recreation employees Danielle Fitzko, Caitlin Cusack, and Jim Esden. I asked that everyone keep track of new infestations in our area or email the location of new infestations if found.

I also emailed Caitlin Cusack the following:

I printed out your email below and brought it to the Brattleboro Town Tree Board meeting on October 9th. We are all very pleased with the attention that you are giving to Brattleboro and the existing, as well as future insect problems here in our community. We all thank you for your time and effort.

Your email below suggests a meeting with the Tree Board sometime between November 15th and December 1st. Our next Tree Board meeting will be Tuesday November 13th. Then we won't meet again until December 11th.

Tree Board members thought that there should be a central phone number, to a State office, where people can get information about any of the invasive insects that are now or may soon be infesting our Urban landscape (trees). It seems that this is a very important piece of the puzzle in getting the public educated, motivated, and sent in the right direction. And that is, of course, of great importance in controlling an invasive insect as well as promoting public involvement in that effort. Volunteers may be able to do the job, but professionals working for the State would be more consistent, better informed, and would carry more weight in their information in the public's eye. A State office could then direct an interested party to local volunteers for site visits, more local information, and possibly enrollment of the interested party in any number of organizations that exist, locally or statewide that are working with the problem.

We also think that your idea to inform nurseymen, tree services, and other professionals that work with urban trees in our area about HWA is a thought that should take high priority at this time. You might consider noting the expanding extent of the HWA infestation in your information to them. That would hopefully spur some on to getting a pesticide applicators license. We have very few licensed in this area at this time. Also, an updated list of licensed pesticide applicators will be important for public referral.

We are glad to have you working with us on this problem Caitlin.

Sincerely,

Dan Adams, Town Tree Warden, representing the Brattleboro Tree Advisory Board

October 25th

Caitlin Cusack emailed me the following:

Hi Dan, tree board members and First Detectors!

Thanks for your continued attention and efforts in addressing HWA and other forest pests! I just wanted to follow-up on a couple of your comments and update you on the Antioch proposal. Our proposal for Antioch graduate students to develop a forest pest preparedness plan has been reviewed by faculty and forwarded on to students. I've attached the project proposal for the tree board members and First Detectors. As I discussed with Dan, we are asking the students to:

- Develop a Forest Pest Preparedness Plan for the City of Brattleboro. A preparedness plan outlines a municipality's goals and objectives and the actions it will take to meet the current or anticipated impact of forest pests on its urban and community forests. When forest pests such as EAB arrive in Vermont, this plan will enable a town to address public and private needs in an efficient and effective manner.
- Update the inventory data (DBH, health) for ash and hemlock and create a map of ash and hemlock trees (including HWA infested trees) in the streetscape.
- Develop communication tools for the tree board to use.
- Give an oral presentation to UCF staff, you and the tree board.

IF there is a group of students interested in the project here's a rough timeline:

Nov.-Dec.--Meet with UCF staff and Brattleboro Tree Warden/Tree Board representatives to negotiate the scope of work.

April 1 (no joke)--Draft Forest Pest Preparedness Plan and communication tools for review by UCF staff and tree warden.

April 15--Comments provided by reviewers.

Early May--Finalize plan and tools and present to tree warden, tree board and UCF staff.

I passed along the tree board meeting dates to the coordinator. Based on the timing they probably would be more likely to be able to make the December 11th meeting. At that time we would all discuss the scope of work and make any adjustments to meet Brattleboro's needs. In the meantime, if anyone has any thoughts or feedback please feel free to contact me at 656-7746 or by email.

As for the contact number for information for residents about invasives pests, I understand your concerns and will discuss them more with Jim. I do want to emphasize that the website [vtinvasives.org](http://www.vtinvasives.org) is the best starting place for questions and I would encourage you to include this in the press release. If you haven't visited [vtinvasives.org](http://www.vtinvasives.org) it is one-stop shopping for information on forests pests and invasive plants. If a resident thinks they might have HWA (or EAB or ALB) it is best to direct them to <http://www.vtinvasives.org/tree-pests/report-it> first. From there they are directed to the "gallery of invaders" where there are photos, ID guides and links to lots more information. If they don't find what they are looking for, then they are directed to which phone number to call for each of the three pests. I suggested the Master Gardener Hotline as the number to share in the press release because most questions are easily answered by directing people to the website or me (to connect them with First Detectors in the area) or Jim (with more detailed questions). However, I will chat with Jim about your suggestion and get back to you about the best state number to direct Brattleboro residents to. Jim would also know more about plans to update nurserymen, trees services, etc. about HWA, disposal options and pesticide application details.

Thanks Dan!
Caitlin

December 4th

Caitlin Cusack emailed me the following:

Hi everyone,
I hope you are all doing well! I just wanted to let you know that I finally heard back from Antioch today and the forest pest preparedness plan project was not selected. While this would have been a nice opportunity for Brattleboro we do have materials, resources and state staff available to to assist you with forest pest planning and response. I've attached a document that provides an overview of the pest planning process. Jim and/or I are happy to get together with you to help identify resources and strategize next steps. Let us know how you'd like to move forward and how we can best support you.

On another exciting note, Jim just informed me that Vermont has been able to obtain some of the predatory *Laricobius* beetles that are a potential biocontrol for HWA. They will be released at a new infestation in Pownal this Thursday. I am excited by the prospect of a future where HWA can be controlled!

Thanks,
Caitlin

November 2nd

Mike Bucossi, Brattleboro Fire Chief, emailed me to ask if I would look at a group of trees that stand next to the West Brattleboro fire station. Steve Barrett, Director of Brattleboro Public Works, advised Mike to have me look at the trees.

November 3rd

I took a look at the trees that stand next to the West Brattleboro fire station. There are 6 or 7 black locust trees in the group. The largest of them is hollow and you can see through the tree from one side to the other. If the tree fell it could possibly take out the power to the fire station. I emailed Mike Bucossi and recommended that he have that tree taken down as soon as possible.

October 24th

Les Montgomery, an opponent of the skateboard park at the Crowell Lot with a group called RESITE, emailed me to inform me of a public meeting at the Crowell Lot the next day at 5pm. Les thought that I should be there as the Town Tree Warden to discuss the fate of the trees if a skateboard park is built. I did not attend the meeting. I did suggest to Les that he and RESITE use the report written by Dave DiBenedetto, an ISA certified arborist who looked at the Crowell Lot trees and the proposed skateboard park construction.

At this point I began to question if the Town Tree Wardens jurisdiction would, under State Statute, be in force at the Crowell Lot since the Brattleboro School District owns the property but allows the town to use it for a playground/park.

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October 29th

I emailed Danielle Fitzko, Urban & Community Forestry Program Coordinator Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation to ask for a legal ruling on the question; Is the Town Tree Wardens jurisdiction, under State Statute, in force at the Crowell Lot.

November 13th through the 19th

Danielle forwarded my question to *Abigail Friedman*, Municipal Assistance Center Director for Vermont League of Cities and Towns. Abigail emailed me to say that the question is too specific for them and directed me to seek an answer elsewhere.

I then emailed Bob Fisher, Brattleboros attorney, with the question. He believes that school property is 'public' and therefore the Town Tree Warden has jurisdiction there.

Kate Forrer, Urban and Community Outreach Specialist with the Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program asked Paul Gillies, a prestigious Vermont Lawyer who wrote 'The Law of Trees' the question. Paul's response was that the property is owned by Windham Southeast Supervisory Union, of which the Brattleboro School District is part of, and therefore is not public property but owned by a union. And therefore, unless the town has a written lease (which it doesn't) that has specific understandings in it the Town Tree Warden does not have jurisdiction there.

Barbara Sondag, Brattleboro's Town Manager weighed in with her thoughts in an email to me. She informed me that the town does have a written lease for the area where the skateboard park is proposed to be built but has no lease on the rest of the Crowell Lot. She goes on to say:

Whether you are working as the Tree Warden or as a private Forester is not an issue for the Town. (Sounds like the situation you have now with the School is better for you) Your work and knowledge is valued and the Town typically follows your advice. You have made a recommendation to the Town School for removal of trees. We respect that recommendation and have already started communication with school on this project.

I can see some people attempting to pull you in to the controversy of skate park. I don't think the School Board or the Selectboard in any way wish to put you in the center of a fight. The Town has hired a firm to begin design. It might be that you could meet with representatives of this firm (at the request of the Town) to find out how they plan mitigate impact on trees etc. This way you can have input into the project but at a process level - keeping you out of the direct conflict.

I have not asked Paul Gillies if he thinks that this lease does or does not meet criteria to make the skateboard park area 'public'. At this point it seems to me that there is no clear answer to the question 'Is the Town Tree Wardens jurisdiction, under State Statute, in force at the Crowell Lot'. It is my opinion that the town leased area of the Crowell Lot does come under the Tree Warden's jurisdiction but the rest of the Crowell Lot does not.

Dan Adams
Consultant Forester
Brattleboro Town Tree Warden