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NEWS

For Immediate Release

November 3, 2015

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Update on Tree Insect and Disease Threats to Northeast Colorado

FORT MORGAN, Colo. – Community forests and private-property shade trees in northeast Colorado are facing two insect and disease threats of significant concern – thousand cankers disease of black walnuts, and emerald ash borer in ash trees – but the good news is that to date they have not had widespread impacts in the area.

Boyd Lebeda, district forester for the CSFS Fort Morgan Field Office, says functioning, resilient community trees offer numerous benefits, including energy saving from reduced heating and cooling costs; noise abatement; carbon dioxide absorption; air pollution abatement; reduced storm water runoff; and improved property values.

“Here in northeast Colorado, trees in our communities are our some of our hardest working residents,” said Lebeda. He warns that the benefits of community trees can be lost or reduced because of significant insect and disease threats.

Thousand cankers disease (TCD) is the result of attacks on black walnut trees by the walnut twig beetle and subsequent canker development around beetle galleries caused by a fungus transported by the beetle. TCD has caused the decline and death of thousands of black walnut trees in several western states over at least the past decade. It has been present on the Front Range for years, but has spread east and was detected in Fort Morgan in 2014. Initial TCD symptoms involve a yellowing and thinning of the upper tree crown, which progresses to include death of progressively larger branches and large areas of foliage rapidly wilting. Trees often are killed within three years after initial symptoms are noted. Read more about TCD at <http://www.thousandcankers.com>.

Emerald ash borer (EAB) is a non-native, wood-boring beetle that attacks all true North American ash tree species. EAB was first detected in Colorado in 2013, and to date has only been detected within the City of Boulder. However, EAB can be expected to likely spread on its own throughout the entire South Platte River Basin within the next decade – or much sooner if due to the human transport of infested wood. Landowners and communities in northeast Colorado should determine if they have ash trees on their properties and, if they do, monitor them carefully for any symptoms of EAB. Any possible detections should be reported to the Colorado Department of Agriculture for verification. Also, planting of non-ash replacement trees at this time may allow young trees to establish before existing ash trees

might need to be later removed. For more information about ash tree and EAB identification, go to www.eabcolorado.com.

Lebeda says that the movement of firewood is one of the primary ways that EAB and TCD are able to move long distances. Generally speaking, firewood should be bought/cut and used locally to prevent the spread of destructive pests. The CSFS suggests using Colorado firewood whenever possible, and always ensuring that firewood or other raw wood is only transported longer distances if a professional forester or other expert has deemed the wood pest-free; it has been debarked; or it has been thoroughly dried or “cured.”

A proactive step that a community can take now to prepare for these and other pests is to do a tree inventory. Knowing about local tree resources is a key initial step to making good management decisions. The CSFS can help communities decide which type of inventory is best suited for their needs, and provide options to meet those needs. A web and mobile mapping application for community tree inventories and related data management is available at www.cotreeview.com.

“Our community forests in northeast Colorado will be more resilient when we have the right trees in the right places,” Lebeda said.

The CSFS Fort Morgan Field Office serves Adams, Kit Carson, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington and Yuma counties. For more information about tree planting and care, or community and plains forestry, contact the office at (970) 867-5610 or visit <http://csfs.colostate.edu>.

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