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NEWS RELEASE

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Officials Support Eradication Plans for East Fork Wildlife Area

COLUMBUS, OH - The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers today announced their support for eradication efforts in the East Fork Wildlife Area to prevent the further spread of the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB). As part of Ohio's cooperative ALB eradication program, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will conduct high-risk host tree removals on a portion of the East Fork Wildlife Area. A link to the press release detailing the plans is provided here: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/2013/09/oh_alb.shtml

The East Fork Wildlife Area is a federally-owned property which is leased by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to ODNR. Tree removals will take place on approximately 55 acres of the 2,705-acre designated state wildlife area. At this time no cutting will be done on any part of the 4,870-acre East Fork State Park.

"By taking aggressive action now in removing both infested and high-risk host trees we are working to keep the destruction caused by this exotic pest from extending to woodlots and communities throughout the rest of our state," said Jim Zehringer, director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. "We appreciate that USDA APHIS has incorporated numerous recommendations into their work plan such as consulting with our wildlife technicians and state foresters on conservation techniques and logging Best Management Practices."

Efforts to control the spread of ALB will fit into the wildlife management objectives for the wildlife area which includes game management, wildlife conservation and pest control. Removal of trees will open the area up to various stages of successional growth that will add to the diversity of habitat resulting in diverse wildlife populations and species. These actions support ODNR goals for the management of wildlife-associated recreation.

High-risk host tree removal will occur up to a quarter mile from infested trees found less than 100 feet from the East Fork Wildlife Area's southern boundary. High-risk host tree removals are part of an integrated approach in eradicating the ALB.

"The Asian longhorned beetle is a very dangerous pest and we must continue to act decisively to keep it from spreading to other parts of Ohio," said David Daniels, director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture. "We support our partners in this eradication effort and continue to work hard to rid the state of this destructive insect."

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The East Fork Wildlife Area is located in southwestern Ohio. Of the 9,960 acres licensed to ODNR, 2,705 acres are managed by the Division of Wildlife for public hunting and fishing. The wildlife area's purpose is to protect and promote habitats and to reduce wildlife damage.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which operates William H. Harsha Lake and is the land owner for most all of the surrounding public lands, "fully supports all measures needed to limit the spread of the beetle and to eliminate it as quickly as possible," stated Michael Turner, Chief, Environmental Resources for the Louisville District, Corps of Engineers. "This invasive insect is a dire threat to much of the eastern deciduous forest, most especially those woodlands found along our rivers and streams. Beyond wide spread ecological effects caused by the loss of birch, buckeye, maple and willow species this beetle, if not totally eradicated, will have severe economic impacts to the United States and Canada. It could destroy the maple syrup industry, greatly damage other wood products industries such as cabinetry, and result in the loss of income to land owners from timber sales."

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