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Perspective Robert Boyles, Chief, ODNR Division of Forestry

Greetings from the Ohio Division of Forestry.

Administration Change

On November 15, 2011 Governor Kasich named James Zehringer to be ODNR's new director. Director Zehringer most recently served in the same capacity at the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA). Working with Director Zehringer is a pleasure – he has a firm grasp on forestry issues, and in fact had already been leading ODA's response to the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) infestation in southwest Ohio.

I truly appreciate the leadership and wisdom of Scott Zody while he bridged the gap as interim director between former Director David Mustine and Director Zehringer. In Scott's current, critical position as chief of the ODNR Division of Wildlife, he and I continue to work together on the many overlapping issues between the Wildlife and Forestry divisions.

Asian Longhorned Beetle

The Division of Forestry continues to work cooperatively with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), ODA, Ohio State University Extension, and other local agencies and organizations towards the goal of complete eradication of the ALB infestation in southwestern Ohio.

Infested tree removals began in November 2011. Options for dealing with high-risk host trees are being weighed, but due to the density of infested trees and high population levels of the beetle, the proposed preferred plan is to remove the high-risk host trees.

Ground surveys have been shown to be around 30 percent effective at finding lightly infested trees, and aerial (tree climbers) surveys are around 60 percent effective at finding these lightly infested trees. Combining this efficacy rate with the high amount of woodland trees with unclear views of the canopy in the infested area, many of the trees currently considered to be high-risk hosts may well be infested already. Leaving these trees allows for any larvae in them to emerge as adults the following year.

As of this writing, an Environmental Assessment is being prepared by USDA APHIS to determine the effect of removing these high-risk host trees, and a determination on the removal of high-risk host trees for the Ohio program will be completed after the public comment period has ended and all comments have been reviewed and considered.

Timber Management on Ohio State Parks

Legislation approved in 2011 authorizes the chief of Ohio State Parks to manage timber resources on state park property. The Division of Forestry is assisting as ODNR begins a sustainable timber harvesting program in selected locations. This assistance includes assessing the overall health and condition of forests within the parks.

Lake Hope, Forked Run, Tar Hollow, and Scioto Trail state parks were selected because they share a common history with adjacent state forests that have been in a continuous forest management program since acquisition by the state. ODNR plans to bid two small harvests this year, at Tar Hollow and Forked Run. Both will be conducted as part of sales already planned at adjacent state forests.

The timber management plans for Ohio State Parks are designed to salvage damaged or unhealthy trees that threaten public safety, increase wildlife diversity potential habitat for threatened or endangered plants, and boost the resilience of the forests to disease and insect attacks.

A public open house was held in November for the unveiling of these forest resource plans. Some of the attendees voiced concerns and, as this program continues to develop, such concerns will be taken into consideration.

Contracting Timber Marking

On a final note, the Division of Forestry is contracting with consultants to mark timber on Ohio's state forests. This will allow for increased business opportunities for private wood-based industries. Approval was received from the state Controlling Board and the division consulted with constituents and the legislature to enable this opportunity.