



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH – GOVERNOR

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CONTACTS:

Abby Ottenhoff	312/814.3158
Rebecca Rausch	217/782.7355
Gerardo Cardenas	312/814.3158
Jeff Squibb (Ag.)	217/558.1546
Marcelyn Love (Ag.)	217/558.1542

Gov. Blagojevich creates loan program to replace ash trees destroyed by the Emerald Ash Borer

Communities eligible for low interest loans for reforestation projects

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich signed legislation today to help Northern Illinois communities infested with the tree-killing emerald ash borer finance potentially expensive reforestation projects. **Senate Bill 1617**, sponsored by State Senator Jeffrey Schoenberg (D-Evanston) and State Representative Julie Hamos (D-Evanston), creates the Emerald Ash Borer Revolving Loan Program, which will provide low-cost loans to local governments for replanting trees on public lands within the boundaries of the state’s emerald ash borer quarantine area.

“While the cost to remove and dispose of infested ash trees can be substantial, the greatest cost from the destruction this beetle causes is the loss of trees that beautify our streets and neighborhoods,” Gov. Blagojevich said. “This program will help restore the quality of life in communities that lose trees to the ash borer and ensure that financing for tree planning projects is affordable. To make sure communities can take advantage of this program, I will include a \$2 million request in the capital bill I introduced that is now before the General Assembly.”

The Illinois Finance Authority will administer the program and issue loans to eligible communities pursuant to the recommendations of the Illinois Department of Agriculture. Loans must be paid off within 20 years. Cash payments received from communities repaying their loans will be returned to the program and used to finance additional replanting projects.

“The replanting program has other benefits as well,” Rep. Hamos said. “Currently, 20 percent or more of the trees in many suburban communities are ash. As different varieties of trees are planted to replace them, we’ll increase the diversity of our tree canopy and lessen the potential impact of pests and plant diseases in the future.”

The emerald ash borer is a small, metallic-green insect from Asia that was first discovered in the United States near Detroit, Michigan, in 2002. The first beetle detection in Illinois occurred in June, 2006 in a rural Kane County subdivision west of St. Charles. Since then, infestations have been identified along Lake Michigan in north Cook County, near Peru in LaSalle County and in Glendale Heights in DuPage County.

The Illinois Department of Agriculture has established a quarantine area to prevent the spread of the beetle. The quarantine area includes all or portions of 18 Northeastern Illinois counties and restricts the movement of ash wood and ash nursery products from these counties to un-infested areas. The impacted counties are: Boone, Bureau, Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, LaSalle, Lee, Livingston, McHenry, Ogle, Putnam, Will and Winnebago.

The legislation also permits the Illinois Department of Agriculture to contract with local governments for assistance with its emerald ash borer program, including the inspection of trees and the transportation, processing and disposal of infested wood products.

SB 1617 becomes effective immediately.