

News Release
8-20-13

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE INCLUDING MORE COUNTIES
IN PUBLIC-PRIVATE PEST PROGRAM**

One of West Virginia's most worrisome forest pests will have fewer places to hide in 2014.

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) has announced it will greatly expand the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) Cooperative Pilot Project, started in 2011 to provide private landowners with an affordable option to save hemlock trees from HWA, a non-native insect that feeds on Hemlock trees.

The project originally covered only the area around the New and Gauley Rivers. The 2013-2014 HWA Program will expand to the 46 West Virginia counties HWA is known to occur: Barbour, Berkeley, Boone, Braxton, Cabell, Clay, Fayette, Grant, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hardy, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Kanawha, Lewis, Lincoln, Logan, Marion, Mason, Mercer, Mineral, Mingo, Monongalia, Monroe, Morgan, McDowell, Nicholas, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Preston, Putnam, Raleigh, Randolph, Ritchie, Roane, Summers, Taylor, Tucker, Tyler, Upshur, Wayne, Webster, Wirt, Wood and Wyoming counties.

West Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture Walt Helmick said the program is the only one of its type in the country.

"HWA treatment has been done in parks and on other public property, but this is the first one that is working to limit this pest on private property," said Commissioner Helmick. "We found there was interest in areas that were not included in the program last year, so we decided to expand the program."

HWA is an insect that appears as white, woolly masses on the underside of hemlock needles and eventually kills the tree, according to Tim Tomon, Forest Entomologist with WVDA's Plant Industries Division.

"Hemlock trees are an important component of West Virginia ecosystems besides their value as lumber, but even more so for their unmatched aesthetic appeal," said Tomon. "They also create habitat for songbirds and other wildlife, including shade that keeps water at trout-friendly temperatures."

Interested landowners have until September 30 to apply for the program. All work will be performed by employees of the WVDA.

Treatments should protect trees for about four years. Landowners accepted for the program must pay either \$1.50 per inch of diameter at breast height (DBH) to \$2 per DBH inch depending on treatment type. The type of treatment depends upon distance of the tree to open water.

Landowners must complete an application and submit it with a map of their property, along with a \$100 deposit that will be applied to treatment costs. WVDA will evaluate landowner sites to ensure they meet the following project qualifications:

- Only private lands within the project area are eligible.
- More than 50 percent canopy cover of hemlocks.
- A woodlot with a minimum of five acres. Adjacent and otherwise eligible landowners may cooperate to meet the minimum acreage requirement.
- Landowners with less than five acres may qualify if the proposed treatment area is adjacent to land being managed for HWA.
- Trees must have more than 50 percent foliage.
- Trees may not have been treated within the last four years.
- Treatment must not pose a safety risk to WVDA field personnel.
- Pesticides used in treatments must be purchased directly by WVDA.

For more information, contact Assistant Director Quentin "Butch" Sayers at qsayers@wvda.us or at 304-788-1066; or Forest Entomologist Tim Tomon at ttomon@wvda.us or at 304-637-0290. Applications and a program brochure may be downloaded at www.wvagriculture.org

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The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs, as mandated by state law. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials in West Virginia. For more information, visit www.wvagriculture.org.