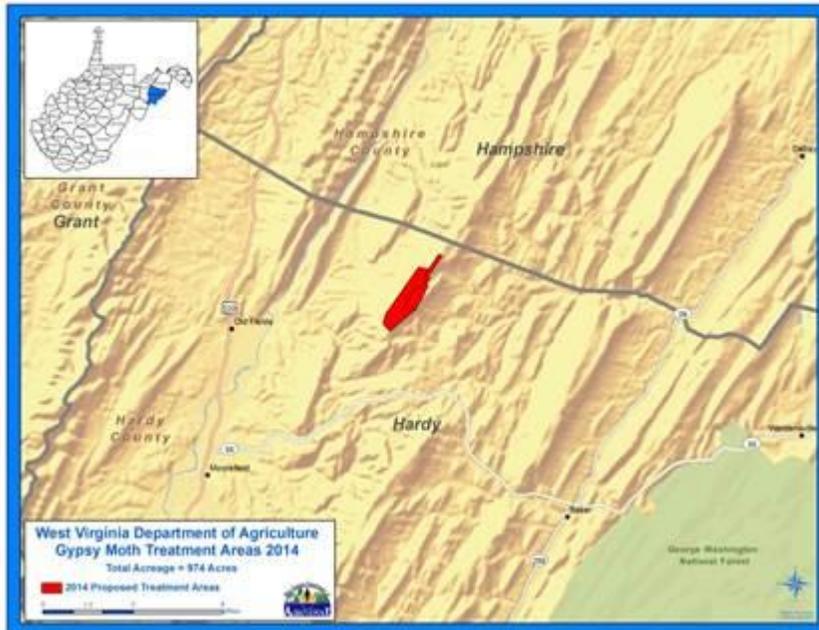


**News Release
2-21-14**

WVDA PROPOSES GYPSY MOTH TREATMENTS FOR SPRING 2014

Commissioner of Agriculture Walt Helmick has announced that the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) is proposing aerial treatment of approximately 974 acres in Hardy County to reduce significant impacts to forests by the gypsy moth. These acres will be treated under the WVDA Cooperative State-County-Landowner (CSCL) Suppression Program.



The gypsy moth is the most serious forest pest in West Virginia. It is a non-native, invasive insect that feeds on over 500 species of trees and shrubs, including West Virginia hardwoods, according to Quentin “Butch” Sayers, Assistant Director of WVDA’s Plant Industries Division.

“Defoliation by gypsy moth caterpillars can kill trees, or weaken them substantially, making them more susceptible to other pests and diseases. This treatment program helps to safeguard our forest resources including homeowner’s trees and our timber and tourism industries, which are vital components of our state’s economy,” said Sayers. “Without control measures, our water quality, recreation

experiences, wildlife habitat, and timber production could all be negatively affected.”

The WVDA consulted with the WV Division of Natural Resources Wildlife Resources Biologist and the United States Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Services concerning the presence of rare, threatened or endangered species issues in the proposed treatment areas. Both agencies concurred that no impacts to any rare, threatened or endangered species are anticipated.

The young gypsy moth caterpillars are spread by wind, which blows the silken threads they exude, creating a parachute effect. Movement by this mechanism tends to be slow. Man however, has sped the process up considerably, by unwittingly transporting gypsy moth egg masses or caterpillars in loads of firewood, on RVs, campers and other vehicles.

WVDA officials caution against the transport of firewood into or out of the state because pests such as the gypsy moth, hemlock woolly adelgid, emerald ash borer, and other non-native invasive insects may be in or on the wood. Non-native pests such as these have potentially devastating economic effects. Owners of RVs and campers are asked to thoroughly inspect and wash their equipment before moving it. Even with all of these precautions, the gypsy moth has, and will continue to spread, leaving site specific treatments as the only way to keep it from population explosions and resulting tree mortality.

Landowners within the CSCL Program area of West Virginia contacted the WVDA to have their properties surveyed to determine if they contained gypsy moth population densities high enough to produce possible tree mortality, defoliation, or a significant nuisance factor in the spring of

2014. Areas with 250 egg masses per acre or higher were designated for possible treatment on properties considered wooded residential or wooded recreational.

Egg mass densities on non-residential forested lands must contain 500 egg masses per acre or higher in order to qualify for treatment. The areas proposed for treatment were delineated on topographic maps and a contract, deposit invoice, and signature map of the proposed spray block boundaries were sent to the landowner.

The landowners in the CSCL Program sign a contract with the WVDA and pay a deposit confirming that they are requesting treatment for their gypsy moth problem. The landowners select the spray material to be used on their property and verify the property boundaries of the area they requested for treatment. The spray materials offered for 2014 were Btk or Mimic. These materials are all labeled by the EPA for the treatment of gypsy moths and safe for use over residential areas.

More detailed maps with specific locations of the proposed treatment areas are available from the WVDA Plant Industries Division offices. These areas would be treated during early to mid-May 2014 depending on weather conditions and the stage of development of the gypsy moth.

The WVDA will immediately begin solicitation of public comment on the areas proposed for treatment to reduce the devastating effect on West Virginia's forest by the gypsy moth. The WVDA will use this input to identify any significant issues related to the proposed project and to develop a range of alternatives.

Any comments or interest in this proposed project should be submitted in writing to Quentin "Butch" Sayers, Assistant Director, PO Box 9, New Creek, WV 26743 or via e-mail to qsayers@wvda.us no later than April 15, 2014.