

# NORTH SMITHFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

## PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

### **Conservation Commission Encourages Public Awareness Regarding Tree-Killing Beetle**

The North Smithfield Conservation Commission urges residents to be on the alert regarding a highly destructive wood-boring pest, the Asian longhorned beetle. At the present time this invasive pest has not been identified in Rhode Island, however just north in Worcester MA a massive effort is underway to contain a large infestation. Worcester's landscape has been drastically altered due to the more than 20,000 trees that have been removed during eradication. These tree-killing insects have no known predators in North America and the only way to stop their spread is to cut down and incinerate the wood of host trees. The Asian longhorned beetle mainly infests trees such as maple, birch, horse chestnut, poplar, willow and elm.

The Asian longhorned beetle was most likely introduced to this country by way of wood packing material that arrived with imported supplies. The USDA is attempting to eradicate the species as its impact could drastically alter our natural forests and urban environment. Additionally in New England, it could pose a serious threat to our maple syrup industry.

Experts say the key to containment is finding it early before it has a chance to become significantly established in an area. Public awareness is central to early identification. Some evidence suggests that Worcester's infestation may have gone unrecognized for a number of years before being identified. The Conservation Commission is encouraging residents to familiarize themselves with the beetle and its pattern of damage so it might be rapidly identified and eradicated should it appear in northern Rhode Island.

Asian longhorned beetle adults are 0.75 – 1.5 inches long with very long black and white banded antennae. Their bodies are a glossy black with irregular white spots. They emerge during the summer months and feed on leaves and twigs but may also be spotted around yards, patios, decks, car hoods, or sides of houses.

To spot signs of an infestation on a tree, look for smooth, round, dime-sized holes left by the adult beetles exiting a tree. These are usually spread out across a tree, not in rows as might be caused by woodpecker activity. Sawdust-like material on the ground around the tree trunk or on limbs and oozing sap may also be present. Females chew small oval pits 1/2 inch in diameter in which to lay their eggs beneath the bark of the tree. During the larval stage the Asian longhorned beetle bores deep into the heartwood of the tree and it is this damage that eventually kills the tree.

Residents should also be aware that these beetles can be transported by way of wood brought in from an infested area. The public is urged to purchase firewood from local sources and not transport firewood from out of state.

Residents are encouraged to report any suspicious tree damage or potential insect sightings by calling the toll free Asian longhorned beetle Hotline # (866)-702-9938. Additional information can be found online at <http://massnrc.org/pests/alb>