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New York State Announces Efforts to Help Control Spread of Sirex Wood Wasp

Comprehensive Program Will Help Limit the Spread of Serious Forest Pest

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Denise M. Sheehan and New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (DAM) Commissioner Patrick H. Brennan today announced a comprehensive program to help limit the spread of a serious forest health pest which can harm pine forests, the Sirex Wood Wasp.

The Sirex Wood Wasp, *Sirex noctilio*, was first discovered in New York State in a bark beetle trap in September 2004 in the City of Fulton, Oswego County as part of the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) Program. This exotic invasive species, native to Europe and a significant pine tree pest in Australia, Africa and South America, is suspected of arriving in wood packing material and has now spread into areas of New York State.

Following the detection of the wasp, DEC, DAM, the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Forest Service (USFS) formed a Sirex Management Team in 2005. The team conducted extensive surveys for the presence of the wasp. Surveys conducted to date have found the wasp in portions of the following 22 counties: Oswego, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, Wayne, Allegany, Erie, Genesee, Jefferson, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Oneida, Ontario, Orleans, Schuyler, Wyoming, Yates, Chautauqua, Madison, Broome and Cattaraugus counties. The Sirex Wood Wasp has also been discovered in a number of southern Ontario, Canada locations, and in Pennsylvania.

Sirex is considered to be a major pest to native red pines, white pines, as well as non-native Scots and Austrian pines. The female wasp carries a fungus which it deposits in a host tree as it lays its eggs. The fungus

weakens the host tree and can lead to mortality in as little as a few weeks.

The Sirex Management Team has developed an action plan to limit the spread of this wasp including an extensive survey component, bio-control research including the use of nematodes, a plan to quarantine if necessary to limit the distribution of infested wood products from affected areas, an outreach and education effort, and applied research to better understand the impacts the wood wasp might have on New York's pine resources.

In addition, the Sirex Management Team has coordinated a comprehensive trapping effort which has placed 1,400 traps throughout the State that are regularly monitored by staff between June and October, during which the insects emerge as adult wasps. To date, 37 Sirex Wood Wasps have been collected during the trapping efforts in 2006.

The traps are hung several feet off the ground in pine stands with preference given to stressed 2- and 3-needle pines at a density of one trap per 25 square miles within 150 miles of known Sirex locations in the U.S. and Canada. The targeted area encompasses most of New York State and portions of Vermont, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan. The density is reduced to one trap per 36 square miles in counties adjacent to the known positive counties and the area of the State that falls outside of the 150-mile radius.

DEC and DAM have distributed information to the forest products industry outlining protocols and actions industry should take to reduce the probability of infected wood materials being transported to non-infested areas. Additional information on the Sirex wood wasp and recommended protocols can be found at:

www.dec.state.ny.us/website/df/privland/forprot/health/sww.html on DEC's website.

The Sirex Management Team currently is studying additional issues related to limiting the movement of certain pine wood products from infested areas. Team members have been meeting with the Empire State Forest Products Association (ESFPA) and forestry industry representatives to examine the processes used by the forestry industry and to determine additional measures that could be taken to mitigate and prevent the spread of this invasive pest. The State also is working closely with the State University of New York's College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF) and Cornell University on applied research related to the insect pest.

DEC's Division of Lands and Forests is also offering a portion of available federal Forest Land Enhancement Funds (FLEP) to private, non-industrial forest land owners to facilitate forest health improvement work in pine stands to help reduce the susceptibility of such stands to Sirex infestation. Interested land owners can find out more information about this program at: www.dec.state.ny.us/website/df/privland/forprot/health/flep.html, or by contacting DEC Regional Forestry offices.

The State is also targeting areas for surveying within the State Forest system which will help determine the extent of this invasive pest's presence on State-owned forest lands, and the impact it is having on the State's pine resources. This is important to ascertain since much of the State's red pine and scots pine resources are located on maturing plantations on State Forests.

Of New York's 800-900 million-board-foot annual timber harvest, approximately 11 percent is comprised of eastern white pine, while another four percent of harvest is comprised of red pine. One-half of the pine harvest is exported to Quebec and Ontario in log form. In New York, pines are used to produce all grades and types of softwood lumber, and important products such as log homes, log home components, telephone poles, various furniture products, molding and millwork and flooring.

The State is committed to working with its partners in the forest products industry, with forest land owners and with federal agencies to limit the damage that this serious forest health pest poses to New York and areas beyond its borders. Last year, the State released a comprehensive Invasive Species Task Force Report that recommended actions to deal with invasive species like the Sirex Wood Wasp. This year, Governor George E. Pataki and the State Legislature allocated \$3.25 million for invasive species control, research, management and education from the Environmental Protection Fund.

The public is encouraged to contact DEC's Forest Health staff at (518) 402-9425 with information about possible Sirex infestations.

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