

# Tree-killing beetles seen in six more N.J. maples -State looks to widen zone of quarantine

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Tree-climbers found six red maples infested with the Asian longhorned beetle in a wooded area southeast of the former Linden Municipal Airport last month, leading agriculture officials to propose expanding the quarantine zone in southern Union and northern Middlesex counties.

The infested maples were found on April 14, about a half-mile within the northern border of the current quarantine area—a zone that includes parts of Carteret, Woodbridge and Rahway in addition to Linden – all towns where trees have been found that were infested with the tree-killing beetle from China.

Anyone within the quarantine zone is prohibited from moving wood, logs, branches or dead trees outside the zone. “The proposal is to expand the zone northeast about a mile,” said Lynne Richmond, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Agriculture.

The current zone is 12.1 miles wide and would be expanded to 13.1 miles under the proposal. Richmond said the proposal must first be published in the New Jersey Register before it can be adopted. Officials said one of the six infested trees found on the Linden site had egg sites and two exit holes and the other five had multiple egg sites and no exit holes. The tree found with exit holes led them to propose expansion of the quarantine zone. The beetles use maples, poplars, elms and other trees common to North America as their breeding ground and food source. They were first discovered in Carteret in August, prompting the federal government to order 4,000 trees to be taken down in the Carteret, Woodbridge, Linden and Rahway in an effort to halt the infestation.

The bugs are shiny black with white spots. Their antennae are longer than their bodies and are banded black and white. Females lay their eggs in tiny indentations they make in the bark of trees. The next stage is the most deadly for trees -- the worm stage, when the worms bore into the center of a tree and feed off its heartwood all winter. In the spring, usually mid-June, the worms, now adults, chew a hole through the tree to get out, find a mate and then find another tree to start a colony. They can fly for several miles.

Barry Emens, director of the New Jersey Asian Longhorned Beetle Eradication Project for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, said last week that the new findings would also increase the number of trees that are being removed in the quarantine zone from about 4,000 to about 8,600.

As of Tuesday, 4,712 trees had been cut down in the quarantine zone and more than 12,000 trees have been inspected by tree climbers who have been inspecting trees in the zone since August, when a Carteret resident found a beetle on one of his maple trees and reported it to

the state. By September, the tree climbers had identified more than 400 trees that had infestations -- mostly in west Carteret and Woodbridge, but there were also two trees in Rahway and two in Linden.

The quarantine zone was expanded by two miles in November with the discovery of additional infested trees in Rahway. There are no chemical treatments that can eradicate the bug from trees without killing the trees too. The only way to kill the beetles is to cut down the trees. Officials have to cut down infested trees and nearby trees that could serve as hosts for the bug.

Personnel from the state have begun treating the more than 20,000 remaining trees in the quarantine zone that are attractive to the beetles with imidacloprid, an insecticide that, when injected into the trees' trunks and the soil around the tree, makes the trees undesirable to the insects.

Monitoring of the area in Jersey City and Hoboken that suffered New Jersey's first outbreak of Asian longhorned beetles in 2002, found that the bugs have not returned, officials said. However, two trees were found recently in Central Park in New York that ere heavily infested with beetles. The beetle was first found in 1996 in Brooklyn and later discovered on Long Island, in Queens and in Central Park. The trees were destroyed and no new infestations in Central Park had been found since 2002 until now.

The New Jersey Forest Service has also begun replacing all of the trees that were cut down with trees that are unattractive to the beetle. Sue Epstein covers Middlesex County. She can be reached at [stein@starledger.com](mailto:stein@starledger.com) or (732) 404-8085.