



A newsletter for landowners of properties protected with conservation easements

The 2019 Monitoring Season is Afoot!

There may still be snow on the ground, but as this newsletter goes to press, our volunteer monitor training sessions are in full swing and the 2019 monitoring season is officially underway.

Barring any mid-April blizzards (ahem, 2018),

we will continue to strive for an earlier jump on our monitoring in order to visit all our protected properties in a timely manner, so look for a staff member or a certified volunteer to be contacting you to schedule a visit in the coming



Pat Collins monitoring a property in Koochiching County

HANSI JOHNSON

months. As always, landowners are encouraged to join the monitoring visit. This is a great time for landowners to ask questions or let the Land Trust know if any changes to the property are planned. Our staff and volunteer monitors enjoy visiting with landowners and walking the land.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 2019 Monitoring Season
- Forest Health in Minnesota
- Survey Results
- Landowner of the Year
- Stewardship by the Numbers
- Leaving a Lasting Legacy
- Staffing Changes

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

CONTACT THE STEWARDSHIP STAFF!

Sue Steinwall, Director of Conservation Stewardship
(651) 917-6280
ssteinwall@mnland.org

Andrew Moe, Stewardship Program Manager
(651) 917-6293
amoe@mnland.org

Amie Schiller, Stewardship Associate
(651) 917-6288
aschiller@mnland.org

What's Bugging my Trees? Forest Health in Minnesota

Minnesota Forests Overview

According to a 2017 USDA bulletin, approximately 17.7 million acres (35%) of Minnesota's total land is forested. Given the high percentage of forest in our state, forest health is a topic of interest to many of our landowners. Unfortunately, the prolific nature of our forests is connected to a flux of forest pests and diseases. In this article, we will address two of the pests currently impacting Minnesota's forests: Oak Wilt and Emerald Ash Borer.

Oak Wilt: Overview

Oak wilt is a plant disease caused by an invasive fungus, which can invade the plant's water-transfer system (xylem) underground, or through sap beetles above ground, who can transfer fungi spores when moving from tree to tree. Currently oak wilt affects oak trees primarily within southeast and east-central Minnesota. Nationally, oak wilt

has been documented in 24 states, with a concentration in the Midwest. Although this disease can affect most of our native oak species, northern red oak and northern pin oak are the species with the greatest risk of infection.

Detection: One of the first signs of oak wilt, is a reddish-brown discoloration along the midvein of leaves. This discoloration may spread across the entire leaf, and infected trees may begin dropping their leaves soon thereafter.

Treatment/Prevention: Unfortunately, oak wilt is fatal for trees within the red oak family (northern red oak and northern pin oak). For oaks within the white oak family



Oak leaves with discoloration symptomatic of oak wilt disease

D.W. FRENCH, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, BUGWOOD.ORG



(white or burr oak), progression of the disease is more gradual, often allowing time for intervention by tree care professionals.

The best strategy to preserve healthy oak trees, is to prevent the spread of the fungus itself. The University of Minnesota Extension recommends not pruning or harvesting oaks in oak wilt counties between April and mid-July to avoid fungi transmission. They also recommend you remove or treat diseased specimens in a timely fashion, in order to minimize disease spread through insects. Lastly, don't move logs or firewood from infected trees to areas where oak wilt isn't present. If you suspect your trees may be infected with oak wilt, consult the University of Minnesota Disease Clinic, your local DNR office, or an experienced tree care professional.

Emerald Ash Borer: Overview

Another pest currently affecting forests in southeastern Minnesota, the Twin Cities metro area, and Duluth, is the Emerald Ash Borer ("EAB"). EAB is an exotic insect originally native to Asia, known for its deadly effect on ash trees throughout the U.S. The first documented appearance of EAB in Minnesota, was in 2009 in St. Paul. A

SOUTH CAROLINA FORESTRY COMMISSION



Emerald ash borer



A "gallery" of s-shaped tunnels beneath the bark of an ash tree is one tell-tale sign of emerald ash borer

year later, EAB was located in greater Minneapolis and other locations in southeastern Minnesota. With nearly one billion ash trees estimated in Minnesota, EAB poses a significant threat to forests statewide.

Life Cycle: Starting in the late spring, adult EAB will emerge from trees to feed and lay eggs within bark crevices of ash trees. After the eggs hatch, hungry larvae tunnel through the inner bark of the tree, disrupting important vascular tissue in charge of exchanging nutrients and water from the roots throughout the tree. The larvae feed on the cambium for one to two years before creating a cavity and transforming into a pupal stage in the spring. In early summer, pupae transform into adult beetles, and escape the cambium by chewing D-shaped exit holes in the bark. As an adult, EAB measures approximately 1/3" to 1/2" long, and has iridescent emerald-copper green coloring throughout its body. A copper colored patch behind the head may also be present.

Detection: The most common indicator of EAB damage are the D-shaped exit holes created by emerging pupae in spring. Another tell-tale sign of EAB, is s-shaped tunnels underneath the bark. These markings are caused by the larvae zig-zagging while feeding on the cambium. Once trees have started to display symptoms of EAB, they can die within one to three years.

Treatment/Prevention: The most effective method for controlling EAB, is prevention. As with oak wilt, refraining from transporting firewood from outside your immediate area is a simple way to keep forest pests from spreading. Although ash trees may be effectively treated with insecticides in the early stages of infestation, this option is not economically viable in most situations. Instead, many owners may opt to remove and/or replace diseased trees with other DNR recommended species. Contact your local tree care professional for more information on safe removal of EAB infected trees.

For More Information and Resources:

To obtain assistance with evaluating the condition of the forest on your property, a great first step is to consult with your local DNR office. There are also several great online resources related to the detection of forest pests, management of infected trees, and recommendations for the selection and care of replacement trees. These resources can be found on webpages maintained by the MN DNR, the MN Department of Agriculture, and the University of Minnesota Extension. Prior to undertaking any action, we also encourage landowners to review their conservation easement and contact the Land Trust with any questions regarding their plans to remove and/or replace trees. In addition, be sure to provide the required notice and obtain Land Trust approval as stipulated in your easement.

2018 LANDOWNER SURVEY RESULTS

Thank you to all who participated in the landowner survey that we conducted last spring. In all we had 166 respondents. The purpose of the survey was to glean more information about the motivations and interests of our landowners and obtain feedback regarding our monitoring program and the Land Trust in general. Here are 3 key takeaways:

- Maintaining wildlife habitat and natural ecology is a primary motivation for owning land
- There was high interest for more information and resources relating to habitat restoration/enhancement and managing invasive species
- Differing conservation priorities between original and subsequent landowners offer opportunities for deeper engagement with the Land Trust

Going forward, we will strive to incorporate these findings into our work as we look to communicate more effectively to our landowners about the issues you care most about. For example, look for periodic e-mail updates when we learn of resources to assist landowners with land management activities. If you know of an opportunity worth sharing with other landowners, let us know and we can help spread the word.

2018 Landowner of the Year

Mike Niziolek was out for a bike ride in the 1990's when he noticed a piece of land for sale that used to be on his paper route as a kid. It just so happened that Mike knew the landowner, who he worked with at Elk River High School, and Mike approached him about purchasing the property. The land was a mixture of cropland, pasture, small woodlots, and a whole lot of peat. Most of it had once been part of a large wetland, but the land had been ditched and drained in order to support agricultural activities.

Mike purchased that property, and, in the years that followed, he acquired more adjacent land – about 150 acres in total – and set to work restoring the property. In that time he has transformed pasture into oak savanna, cropland into prairie, and, with the help of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, restored a large wetland to its former glory, all to the benefit of wildlife and water quality



2018 Landowner of the Year Mike Niziolek (left) with Land Trust board members Rick Rosvold (center) and Mark Norquist on Niziolek's property.

alike. In 2010, he placed a conservation easement on the property, ensuring his hard work would be permanently protected. But he's not done yet. As Mike puts it, "I still have lots more to do, but I'm happy this land is protected forever for future generations."

In recognition of his efforts, it was our great honor to present Mike with the Landowner of the Year award at

the 2018 Treasured Places event in Alexandria last September. On behalf of everyone at the Land Trust, thank you to Mike and to all our landowners who go the extra mile in the name of conservation – keep up the good work! Treasured Places will return again in Fall 2019 - sign up for our email newsletter at www.mnland.org for the latest updates.



1,400+
Volunteer
hours in 2018

STEWARDSHIP & CONSERVATION BY THE NUMBERS

567
Sites Monitored
in 2018



54 COUNTIES
with a Conservation Easement

57,236

Total Acres
Protected



1,691,527 Total Feet of
Shoreline Protected

101 VOLUNTEER MONITORS

65% of Sites Monitored by
Volunteers / **35%** by Staff



MINNESOTA LAND TRUST

2356 UNIVERSITY AVENUE W.
SUITE 240
ST. PAUL, MN 55114

651-647-9590 1-877-MLT-LAND
MNLAND.ORG

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



A Lasting Legacy

Whether it was going on your first fishing trip, spotting a rare bird, or just enjoying a quiet walk in the woods- chances are some of your fondest memories were made outdoors enjoying the land and waters that make Minnesota so unique.

As you plan for your future, you can ensure those experiences exist for the next generation of Minnesotans, and build in them the same connection to the outdoors that you have. By making a planned gift that reflects your love for our state's natural places, you help preserve those places, and those experiences—forever.

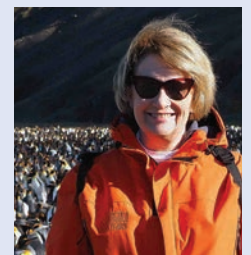
Explore planned giving options online at mmland.org/planned-giving or call Director of Development and Communications Alex Tsatsoulis at 651-917-6289 to discuss today.

STEWARDSHIP DEPARTMENT STAFFING CHANGES



Last spring, we hired Stewardship Associate Amie Schiller, a Vermonter with a penchant for photography and birding. She has hit the ground running and we are lucky to have her on our team! Andrew Moe assumed the role of Stewardship Program Manager.

This year, we welcome Sue Steinwall as the new Director of Conservation Stewardship. Sue comes to us from the Minneapolis law firm of Fredrikson & Byron, where she headed the firm's environmental law group. From 2010 to 2017, Sue served on our Board, including a term as Chair. She is a Minnesota native and a graduate of Grinnell College and the U of MN Law School. Feel free to stop by sometime to welcome Sue!



We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Ann Thies, who retired from the Land Trust on March 1. Ann worked for the Land Trust for more than 8 years over two stints, and was a steady hand guiding the stewardship department through a period of growth. We are grateful for her dedication to the Land Trust and wish her all the best—Happy Trails Ann!

