



Staff Report

September 21, 2026 Council Workshop Meeting

Emerald Ash Borer Update

Presenter: Chris Witkowski, Parks & Recreation Director

Time Estimate: 15 minutes

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BACKGROUND: Emerald Ash Borer is an invasive beetle that bores into Ash trees (*Fraxinus* spp.) and, through a chemical release, kills the trees. It is classified as an invasive species that originated in East Asia and was transported to the eastern US about 25 years ago, likely through transfer of wood products. The beetle has been slowly working its way west, devastating ash trees along the way. The kill rate of an EAB-infected area is 90-100% of Ash trees. It spreads most commonly through the transfer of firewood and, once in a region, through flight and/or latching on to objects such as cars.

SUMMARY: The State of Washington and USDA confirmed the state's first detection of EAB in Vancouver in August 2026. With its arrival knowingly imminent, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) previously prepared a list of safeguarding measures for the impending infestation, which the City of Camas has followed. These include:

- Inventorying the urban forest to understand the ash tree population
- Establishing a tree replacement program
- Injecting select ash trees with an insecticide created specifically to deter EAB

Though the City has been working on the aforementioned measures, the EAB strategy will need to be advanced due to its presence in the region. If it's in Vancouver, it's likely already in Camas or will be very soon. Though difficult to put an exact timeframe on infestation, a majority of the City's Ash trees will be dead or in significant decline within 3-7 years of EAB's arrival. If the beetle is already here, a decline in the health of smaller trees may be detected as early as 2027 or 2028.

The City's current inventory of publicly planted ash trees shows 343 inside city limits. The two most concentrated areas are Green Mountain (approx. 100) and Downtown (approx. 75). This does not include private trees, open space tracts, or native stands of Oregon Ash.

There is no known protective measure against EAB. Once infestation begins, tree health will rapidly decline. As such, the City is working on the following mitigation plan:

- Inject select Ash trees with an insecticide designed to deter EAB
 - Injections can only be applied to mature, healthy trees
 - Injections only have an effective rate of two years
- Visual inspection of Ash trees
- Set beetle traps to determine infestation rate and locations
- Begin removal of damaged and weakened Ash trees
- Plan for a staggered removal of remaining Ash trees
- Systematically replace removed trees to re-establish canopy cover
- Public communications strategy

BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY: EAB can be devastating to a municipality's urban forest due to rapid decline in tree health. With 343 Ash trees in the Camas inventory, the infestation must be addressed. Weakened or deceased trees will be susceptible to falling limbs and/or full tree collapse, thereby creating a public safety issue. Loss of tree canopy will affect heat levels, stormwater management, and property values. Replacing Ash trees before EAB is fully present avoids these scenarios and provides Camas with the full benefits of a healthy urban forest.

STRATEGIC PLAN: Due to the ultimate removal and replacement of over 300 trees, this topic covers the strategic priority of Stewardship of City Assets.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES: The primary challenges include volume of trees impacted, timeframe before EAB arrives, and funding. The infestation cannot be avoided but sourcing enough resources to mitigate its impacts could put pressure on the City.

BUDGET IMPACT: Budget impact will range from \$600,000 - \$1,500,000 for complete removal and replacement of all Ash trees. These costs include removal and disposal, planting, maintenance, and tree grates (downtown). Total budget impact will depend on replacement strategy and staging.

RECOMMENDATION: This is for Council's information only.