

USDA-NRCS Maine State Technical Committee (STTC) Meeting

3/12/2024

Overall Key Points:

- 2nd application batching deadline announced for FY24 National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) Program: April 5, 2024

Meeting start time: 8:32 am

Welcome and NRCS Briefing:

Welcome was made by Peter Beloff (ME NRCS Acting State Conservationist). Informed attendees that they plan to start opening large conference to do in person meetings again. Mentioned the agricultural bill was funded and some funds were reduced on some programs meaning the state allocation might change a little bit. Announced that the NRCS staff finished ranking and are ready to start the application selection process. Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) hiring is finally coming to a close and the focus is to get new employees the necessary training. There are currently 92 NRCS employees and approximately 20 partner positions. ME State Conservationist Matt Walker's detail was extended a couple weeks, and he should return around early April.

Maine Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) Briefing:

Carol Weymouth (MACD Executive Director): "Good Morning, all so good to have the opportunity to share updates and news from Maine Association of Conservation Districts, and the sixteen Soil and Water Conservation Districts in our state. As you know, the Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) host Local Working Group meetings that provide input, conservation concerns, and recommendations to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) field offices within their service area. It's important to note that these public meetings take place across the nation and US territories with over 3,000 Soil and Water Conservation Districts involving community members, stakeholders, and area professionals. As has been determined for decades, the principal of individual communities emphasizing their local conservation priorities establishes specific concerns and need within their landscape. But Local Working Groups provide much more; input and recommendations to assist in a wide range of conditions including identifying local environmental problems in general, changes in the natural resource priority, recommendations on specific possible needed solutions, to name a few. In addition, the Local Working Group provides the field office NRCS District Conservationist guidance for ranking and evaluating applications for the USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program, or EQIP, for the following fiscal year. In Maine, these meetings – at the request of the State Technical Committee – are scheduled in the fall and early winter. Public announcements, newsletter and website listings, plus phone and email reminders provide outreach for public involvement. In the past months, there has been a notable increase in newly hired staff at Soil and Water Conservation Districts, NRCS, State Agencies, as well as new residents to Maine. Local Working Groups may be organized differently or be completely unfamiliar for some who recently moved to our State. For SWCD staff, Supervisors, and Board

Members, plus our partners in conservation, the National Conservation Planning Partnership – consisting of the National Association of Conservation Districts, United States Department of Agriculture, the National Association of State Conservation Agencies, the National Conservation District Employees Association, and the National Association of RC&D Councils - created a number of resources to provide guidance and examples in hosting Local Working Groups. These resources are especially useful for those new to Soil and Water Conservation Districts and new to NRCS, affording templates to consider for Local Working Group Meetings, including roles and responsibilities. The partnership between the members of the National Conservation Planning Partnership extends beyond the Local Working Group, of course. Last month, I attended the National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting in San Diego, CA. As Maine’s NACD Board Member, I attended sessions to hear from the national partners, conservation professionals, and agricultural and natural resource industry leaders. Plus, I participated in national and regional meetings to provide input, share concerns, and offer recommendations on behalf of our State and our Northeast Region. Promoting partnership and collaboration benefits from ongoing education, awareness, and communication. Our primary goal and objective, of course, is to provide the residents of Maine with customer service, resources, guidance, and technical assistance to educate and solve site specific natural resource conservation issues. By recognizing the importance of partnerships and communication, plus courtesy and consideration, the mission of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, USDA, State Agencies, and others can continue the proud history of supporting Maine landowners and residents. Thank you so much, to Maine NRCS and all members of the State Technical Committee, for your time.”

Programs updates by Leslie Nelson Assistant State Conservationist for Programs:

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Maine NRCS Programs Update
State Technical Committee Meeting
March 12, 2024

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USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Topics to present

- Review of FY24 delivery information
- Payment Schedules
- Status of FY24 Program allocations

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Review of Delivery decisions for FY24

Initial application deadlines:

- AMA, CSP, CSP-IRA, EQIP, EQIP-IRA, and RCPP2018 was August 25, 2023.

ACT NOW opportunity for all planning activity applications (CPAs, DIAs, and CEMAs).

- Sign up for ACT NOW is currently in progress. \$1.5 million set aside for obligations. The process will continue until set aside funds are expended.



FY24 Preapproval Process

Ranking deadline for CSP, EQIP, AMA, RCPP was March 1st 2024.

Preapproval review process underway. Currently assessing fund pools for application funding decisions/selection.

Goal is to obligate at least 80% of initial allocations by June 30, 2024.



CSP statewide fund pools for FY24

Fund Pools include:

- Ag Land Classic
- Ag Land Beginning Farmer
- Ag Land Socially Disadvantaged
- Ag Land Organic (not for CSP-IRA)
- NIPF Classic
- NIPF Beginning Farmer
- NIPF Socially Disadvantaged



Payment schedule information

- **Reminder: 2024 Payment schedules are posted online:** <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/payment-schedules>
- The FY2025 payment schedule development process will begin very soon.

AMA statewide fund pools for FY24

- High Tunnel Systems
- Irrigation (both micro and sprinkler)

EQIP fund pools for FY24

- EQIP General (state and local fund pools)
- EQIP NWQI:
 - National Water Quality Initiative targeted to Sheepscot and Cross lake watersheds.

EQIP General fund pools for FY24

State Fund Pools

- ACT NOW
- Aquatic Restoration
- Beginning Farmer (Ag Waste focus)
- Deer Wintering Yard Initiative
- EQIP CIC (Pasture focus)
- On-Farm Energy
- Organic Initiative
- Pollinators
- Socially Disadvantaged
- Tribal Projects
- Urban Agriculture
- Water Conservation

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EQIP General fund pools for FY2024

Local Fund Pools

- Cropland
- Agricultural Waste
- Forestry
- Pasture
- Wildlife
- Unique Local Priority

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Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Program

- Separate IRA allocations for CSP and EQIP.
- Specific fund pools required for IRA funds. The IRA funds cannot be combined with CSP Classic or EQIP Classic funds.
- Focused on Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry. Specialized list of practices that yield climate change mitigation benefits.

A summary of IRA information can be found on the national NRCS website:
[Inflation Reduction Act | NRCS \(usda.gov\)](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/inflation-reduction-act)

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Looking forward to FY25

- ACT NOW (ongoing until funds expended) - Conservation Planning Activities
- NWQI 2nd signup batching deadline April 5th, 2024
- NRCS accepts producer applications for its conservation programs year -round, but producers interested in funding consideration for the initial FY25 batching period (EQIP, CSP, AMA, RCPP) should apply by **August 23rd, 2024**

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Presenter: Tyler Everett Ash Protection Collaboration Across the Wabanakik (<https://umaine.edu/apcaw/>)

Brown Ash or Black Ash

(Fraxinus nigra Marsh.)

- **Habitat:** moist to wet muck or shallow organic soils, especially in swamps, floodplains, terraces, ravines, and on small, poorly drained upland pockets.
- Shade Intolerant Species
- Found in primarily even-aged pockets across the Great Lakes and Acadia regions of North America, and in southeastern Canada.
- Maine's brown ash population occurs in scattered pockets across the landscape, rarely creating large contiguous stands of pure ash trees.

Tyler Everett - APCAW (2/20/24)

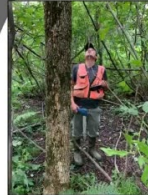
The Significance of Brown Ash Trees

The Cultural Significance:

- Basketry a Cultural Lifeway and a Source of Economic Income
- Referenced in one of the Wabanaki Creation Stories
- Woven into the cultural identity of the Wabanaki People

The Ecological Significance:

- Support a range of flora and fauna
- Highly diverse and unique ecosystems
- High nutrient leaf litter
- Uniquely Adapted to Regulate Hydrology



Tyler Everett - APCAW (Unverified)

Indigo Basketry Photo - Jeremy Frey, Panamintville Basketry photo

Cultural Significance of Ash

Invaluable in basketry



Latewood
Earlywood

Fall - Winter
Summer
Spring



Molly Neptune Parker splitting wood

Tyler Everett - APCAW (Unverified)

Indigo Basketry Photo - Jeremy Frey, Panamintville Basketry photo

Inspiration and Passion



Tyler Everett - APCAW (Unverified)

Indigo Basketry Photo - Jeremy Frey, Panamintville Basketry photo

Inspiration and Passion

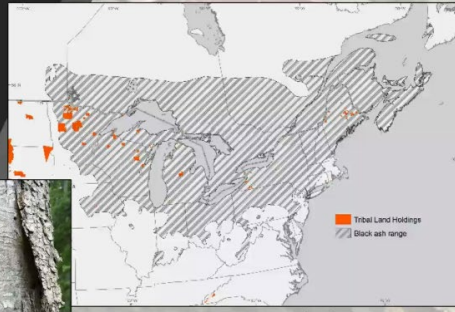


Tyler Everett - APCAW (Unverified)

Image: Backyard Photos - Jeremy Frey, Pannanqually (Unverified)

The Threat: Emerald Ash Borer

- Invasive Forest Pest from Southeast Asia
- First detected in Detroit Michigan
- A Woodboring Insect That Readily Girdles North American Ash Trees
- Severe and Extensive Impact has been observed
- Detections in 36 states, and 5 Canadian Provinces
- Potentially Impacting the Forests of 54 Eastern-Affiliated Federally Recognized Tribal Nations
- Detected in Maine in 2018



Tyler Everett - APCAW (Unverified)

Image: Backyard Photos - Jeremy Frey, Pannanqually (Unverified)

Emerald Ash Borer – Life Cycle

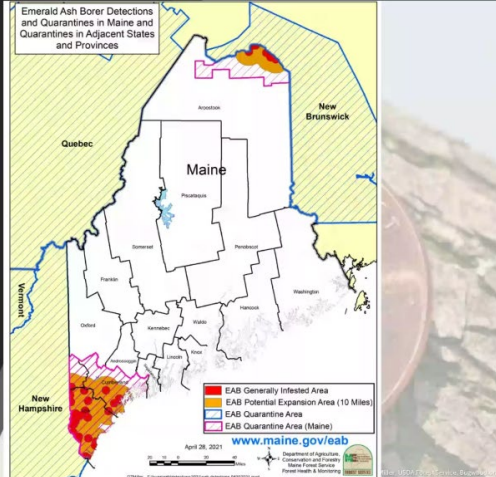


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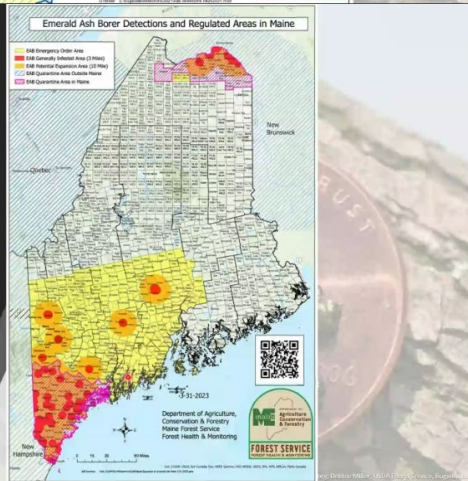
Emerald Ash Borer Quarantine in Maine 2021 - Present

April 28th, 2021
Announced Expansion of
EAB Quarantine Area.

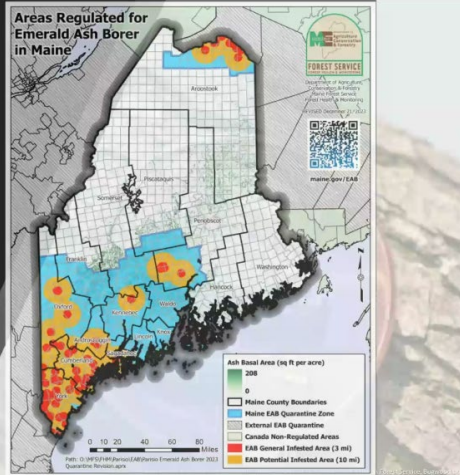


Emerald Ash Borer Quarantine in Maine

March 31st, 2023
New Emergency Order Areas
Go Into Effect.



Emerald Ash Borer Quarantine in Maine



The Ash Protection Collaboration Across Wabanakik

Overview & Current On-going Work

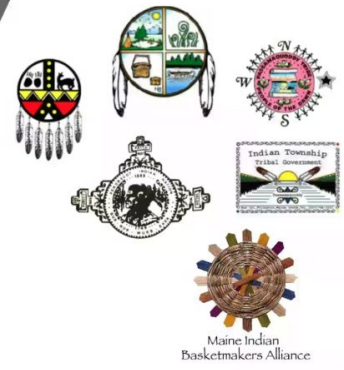
- A Research Group Focused on Attaining Tribal Research Priorities
- Our Tribal Nation Partners are the Leaders
- We just Launched a New Webpage
- Webinars and in-person training series - in the works
- Brown Ash Colloquium in Spring 2024

APCAW Website

URL: <https://umaine.edu/apcaw/>



Our Tribal Partners



- Listening to the Community -

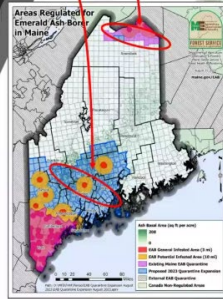
- Ash Management Community Meeting Focus Group Sessions



An Example of How I plan to Continue to Listen

Brown Ash Wetland Forest Management Trials (An Example of How I plan to Continue to Listen)

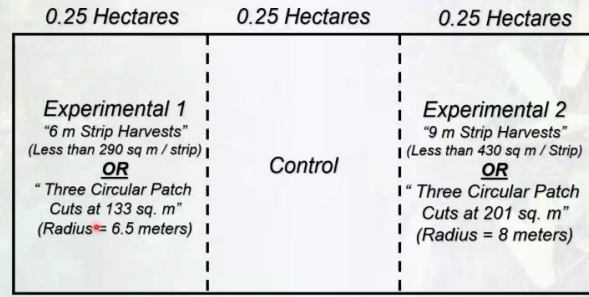
- Two Study Sites in Northern Maine (Near EAB)
- Two Study Sites in Central Maine (That Were Far From EAB)
- Management Goals:
 - Maximize chances of maintaining ash on the landscape
 - Create new cohorts of ash to replace overstory components
 - Integrate tactics that Tribal Nation partners support



Tyler Everett - APCAW (download)

Photo courtesy of the University of Maine

- Silvicultural Treatments of Brown Ash Wetland Forests -

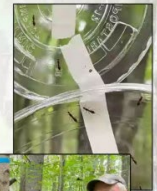


Tyler Everett - APCAW (download)

- The Biological Control of Emerald Ash Borer -



- Biological Controls:
- Controlled Release of Parasitic Wasps - A Natural Enemy of EAB
 - Wasps Are Native to Asia
 - Releases are actively being carried out in Maine



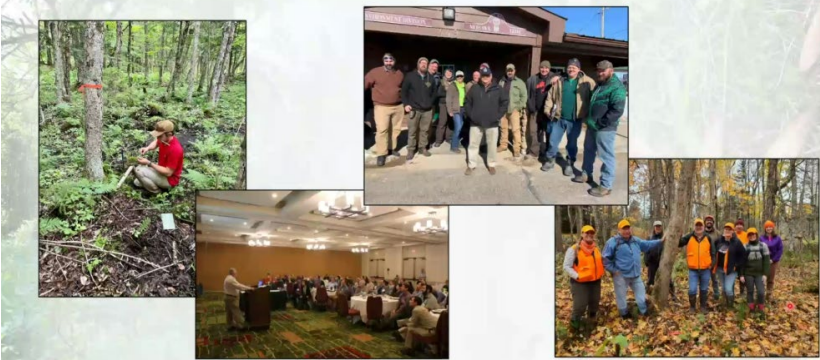
Tyler Everett - APCAW (download)

- The Chemical Treatment of Ash -

- Reserve Trees Can be Treated with Injected Systemic Insecticides
- Emamectin Benzoate is injected into the tree every 2-3 years



Tyler Conant - APCRM (Inventor)



Growing community and sharing information related to strategies for Ash Preservation

Tyler Conant - APCRM (Inventor)

- Acknowledgements -



Tyler Conant - APCRM (Inventor)



Subcommittee Reports:

Climate Smart-Rachel Schattman (Chair)

- Last subcommittee meeting was on January 19th, went over obligations for climate smart pool in FY23. Have been asked to focus on outreach and put practices forward to be added to the climate smart list. Next meeting April 12th at 3pm.

Forestry-Allyssa Gregory (Chair)

- Next meeting tentatively scheduled for May 15th

Irrigation-George McLaughlin (Chair)

- Subcommittee has not met recently working on scheduling the next meeting.

Source Water Protection:

- Not present

Wildlife:

- Not present

Urban Agriculture-Carrick Gambell (Chair)

- Met January and discussed possible changes to Urban Ag. fund pool and ranking. Next meeting will be April 30th at 9am.

Next committee meeting tentative date: Tuesday June 11th