



St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

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NEWS RELEASE

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Basket Making Ash Resources Protected *Waiver Permit Available From Tribe*

Akwesasne, NY - As the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) continues to spread across North America, the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe has had to respond to USDA-Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) - Plant Protection and Quarantine (USDA-PPQ) permit requirements for importation of ash logs from Canada.

The Akwesasne Mohawk community and its basket makers, log pounders and log harvesters have long enjoyed transporting black ash logs from Maniwaki, Quebec acquired through inter-tribal trade with the Algonquin community that lives there. Because this area of Canada remains EAB free at this time and due to the long history of trade between the two native communities, Mohawks continue to seek black ash logs from Maniwaki.

However, out of concern for introduction of EAB from Canada and there being several areas with known pockets of EAB including the Ottawa, Ontario region and City of Cornwall, APHIS has stepped up procedures at ports of entry to intercept potentially insect infested wood. Black ash logs fit into this category of material and therefore are subject to inspection and possible rejection at the border.

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Environment Division had discussions with APHIS to determine the impacts of the permit requirements on the local basket making trade. The Environment Division felt that the permit requirements would place an unnecessary burden on community members who transported black ash from Maniwaki into the community. Following consultation with APHIS, a permit waiver request was filed. While the consultation process facilitated a better understanding of the Akwesasne community to APHIS, the waiver request was denied. Further dialogue and consideration by the State Plant Health Director resulted in a permit application process resulting in a reduced burden to the community.

These processes resulted in the issuance of the *Permit to Import Timber or Timber Products* being issued by APHIS. A copy of this permit is available for any community member choosing to use this process for transporting black ash from Maniwaki through either the Massena or Ogdensburg Port of entries to the US side of Akwesasne.

In order to ensure a smooth as possible transport of black ash through either of these ports to Akwesasne, the US Customs and Border Protection has agreed to work with the Tribal representatives, its basket making and log harvesting community and USDA-APHIS to open dialogue concerning the implementation of the permit process.

Some key points regarding the permit are:

- The permit holder is the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe.
- The permittee is Chief Ron LaFrance Jr. because he was recently elected and will be available for the duration of the current permit, three years. This will facilitate a higher level of institutional memory regarding the permit.
- Community members are encouraged to utilize the permit process when transporting ash logs from Maniwaki to facilitate smoother processing at the border. Community members electing to transport ash logs without the permit may encounter unnecessary delays at the border.
- If any unforeseen issues emerge at the port of entry, community members are asked to contact the Environment Division or the Tribal Council offices directly for assistance. Note - offices are not open on weekends and holidays.
- The permit is valid for entry at the Massena and Ogdensburg ports of entry.
- The permit is valid for ash logs (black ash, white ash, green ash).
- Other conditions and requirements within Canada may apply but are not regulated by this permit. Therefore harvesters should check with Canadian officials to determine what additional requirements may exist.
- Waste bark removed from logs once in Akwesasne should be stripped and the bark burned or chipped **and** buried to a depth of 12 inches or deeper. Note - open burning is regulated by the Tribal Air Quality Program. Community members should contact the Air Quality Program regarding open burning of ash bark.

The Tribe, through its Environment Division, will make copies of the permit available at their offices during regular business hours, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., *Wetentawén'kie'*/Monday through *Wiskhaton*/Friday. The Environment Division plans on hosting a meeting with local basket makers and log harvesters to discuss the permit and answer questions. Copies of the permit will be made available at this meeting. Because of their close interaction with many of Akwesasne's basket makers, the waiver permits will also be available at the Akwesasne Cultural Center Museum located at 321 State Route 37 in Akwesasne, NY.

Any questions can be directed to the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, Environment Division at 449 Frotown Road or by mail to 412 State Route 37, Akwesasne, NY 13655, (518) 358-5937.

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The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council is the duly elected and federally recognized government of the Saint Regis Mohawk People.