



# St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

Chief Paul O. Thompson  
Chief Beverly Cook  
Chief Ron LaFrance Jr.  
Sub-Chief Eric Thompson  
Sub-Chief Shelley Jacobs  
Sub-Chief Michael L. Connors

## NEWS RELEASE

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For more information:  
Communications Department  
Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe  
Tel: (518) 358-2272

### **Tribal Forestry Targets Forest Tracts to Improve Forest Health** *Community Members Sought for Assistance*

**Akwesasne, NY** - The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe's Forest Resources Program has developed plans to improve forest health in forested areas located in Akwesasne. The plans were created in an effort to head off the potential risks from the emerald ash borer that have been steadily expanding its reach since first discovered in Detroit, MI in 2002. Since its introduction to the United States from Asia, the ash borer has destroyed millions of ash trees, which is of significant importance and concern for the Mohawks of Akwesasne. As a result, Forest Resources has been working on plans to manage the emerald ash borer in collaboration with agencies such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs, United States Forestry Service, United States Department of Agriculture and United States Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as Akwesasne basket makers and loggers.

Forest Resources, in consultation with cooperating agencies, has determined that reducing the number of ash trees in local forests will greatly reduce the borer's impact on forest health. To accomplish this, a stand-specific risk assessment will be conducted, along with an inventory of existing ash trees, to estimate the potential impact and manage ash trees to a forest population of 20 percent or lower. The goal is to reduce the chance for the ash borer to spread and to ensure the healthy growth of ash trees in Akwesasne.

To date, the emerald ash borer has spread to 39 counties in New York State and is as close as Cornwall, Ontario; where they were discovered two years ago. Currently, the overall risk to forests in Akwesasne is very high given the ash borer's close proximity, which is estimated to reach our forest stands within the five years.

To help protect our community's ash trees, Forest Resources will be measuring trees in two distinct forest tracts located in the Frogtown area (see map inset). The tracts are 180 acres and 550 acres, totaling 730 acres. The plan is to inventory and conduct forestry measurements in the 180-acre tract in 2015 and in the 550-acre tract in 2016. Once the number of ash trees is determined, a treatment plan will be developed that will reduce the ash component to 20 percent or less. The treatment plans will vary, but generally consist of completely removing or girdling ash trees.

412 State Route 37  
Akwesasne, New York 13655  
Phone: 518-358-2272

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Several options are possible to local landowners; including having Forest Resources doing the treatment plan, having landowners doing the treatment plan at a fixed cost per acre on a reimbursement basis, or having the work contracted. In every case, timber that is salvageable will be used for the benefit of the landowner.

At this time, Forest Resources requests the assistance of landowners in the targeted areas to arrange a consultation prior to doing any work. Landowners in these areas may contact Forest Resources to schedule a meeting by calling (518) 358-5937 or e-mailing [les.benedict@srmt-nsn.gov](mailto:les.benedict@srmt-nsn.gov).

Please note that this program is completely voluntary and, while Forest Resources strongly encourages participation, no-one is compelled to participate. In the absence of participation, other areas and landowners may be identified for participation.

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