



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

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News release

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Kenosha County's emerald ash borer removal project earns DNR Innovations in Urban Forestry honors

Kenosha County's innovative, cost-effective approach to removing emerald ash borer-infested trees from three parks recently gained honors from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

The Parks Divisions' Emerald Ash Borer Mechanized Tree Removal and Utilization Project was the recipient of the Innovations in Urban Forestry award, announced last week at the 2018 Wisconsin Arborist Association/DNR urban forestry conference in Green Bay.

"Kenosha County took a proactive approach to this problem, created a new process and saved a lot of cash along the way," said Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser.

The project – initiated in 2015 by now-retired Parks Director Jonathan Rudie, and continued by current Parks Director Matthew Collins – involved the removal of 4,044 diseased trees in Petrifying Springs Park, Fox River Park and Brighton Dale Links golf course.

These trees were removed per the recommendations of a study that Kenosha County Parks conducted in partnership with the DNR following the first sighting of the tree-killing emerald ash borer in Kenosha County in 2009.

While other communities across Wisconsin were responding to the ash borer crisis, Kenosha County took the unique approach of contracting with a logging company that was able to reuse the wood, rather than a tree removal contractor. This came with a great cost savings to the county.

Kenosha County ultimately contracted with Oshkosh-based Koerner Forest Products at a final fee of \$62,445, amounting to a removal cost of just \$15.44 per tree. The highest bid from a forestry contractor was \$1.1 million – more than 17 times greater than the low bid by Koerner.

Koerner used mechanized equipment to process trees at an average rate of 2.2 minutes each. The felled trees were then sold to area sawmills to create lumber, railroad ties, interior furnishings

and firewood. All parts of the trees were repurposed, including limbs that were ground into mulch by a local landscaping company.

Reforestation of the affected parks is underway, with the county having received a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant in 2016 to replace 317 trees within Petrifying Springs Park and Golf Course. Since the discovery of the ash borer within Kenosha County, the Division of Parks has planted more than 2,500 replacement trees throughout the parks system.

“Obtaining funding to responsibly replace these lost trees will remain a priority for us,” Kreuser said.

Collins, who accepted the DNR award on behalf of the Parks Division, said Kenosha County can be considered a leader for other communities dealing with the fallout of the emerald ash borer.

“This award showcases how well Kenosha County managed the EAB within our Park System,” Collins said. “It is my hope that our success and strategy will resonate throughout the state and nation to aid in best management practices as other communities struggle with the devastations of the EAB.”

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