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A MILLION DOLLAR ANTIDOTE TO EMERALD ASH BORER EFFECTS

Grant Money For Municipalities Fighting Invasive Pest Becomes Available Today

LISLE, IL (December 1, 2010) – The Morton Arboretum and the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC) today are making one million dollars in federal grant money available to municipalities to fight the devastating effects of emerald ash borer (EAB). The invasive pest already killed tens of millions of ash trees in North America and threatens the estimated 130 million ash in Illinois.

The Arboretum and MMC, which represents 272 Chicago-area mayors, today posted a Request for Proposal on their websites (see URLs below) for municipalities to apply for the grant money.

“The goal is to foster a sustainable urban forest by assisting municipalities in planning for and coping with EAB effects,” says Edith Makra, Arboretum Community Trees Advocate. “U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) has been a longtime champion in this effort,” she says.

Durbin spearheaded the effort to provide funding.

“Communities are struggling with the costs associated with combating the destructive beetle and the federal funding announced today will help alleviate the financial burden of removing infested trees and planting new ones. I am grateful for the work of The Morton Arboretum in assisting Illinois communities,” Durbin says.

David Bennett, MMC Executive Director says, “EAB crosses multiple city boundaries, meaning solutions should be addressed on a regional basis. This funding will be crucial for preserving quality of life in our region of Illinois by helping local governments restore diminished tree canopy.”

Through the funding and the Arboretum’s expertise, municipalities can acquire trees to replace those threatened or destroyed by EAB, plant the trees using best practices, and bolster existing community tree care programs or help governments roll out such programs.

The newly-planted trees will provide a myriad of environmental benefits: clean air and water, reduced storm water runoff and erosion, and reduced energy demand as trees mitigate the heat-island effect. Additionally, the newly-planted trees will help to diversify the communities’ tree cover, helping to guard against losses due to future pests and diseases.

Among the economic benefits, the tree planting will help promote Illinois’ nursery industry through the sale of replacement trees. And for businesses, a study shows shoppers in well-landscaped business districts are willing to pay more for parking and up to 12 percent more for goods and services.

Municipalities wishing to apply for the grant money can access the RFP on the Arboretum’s website at <http://www.mortonarb.org/tree-plant-advice/article/600.html>, or

the MMC website at <http://www.mayorscaucus.org>. Completed applications are due by January 21. Municipalities are expected to provide a 20 percent in-kind match for the total dollar value of their projects.

The grant money results from an Arboretum-led collaboration involving itself, the MMC, and the U.S. Forest Service to counteract the destruction of the invasive insect. Experts cite such pests as one major factor in threatening species with extinction. According to the Forest Service, there are an estimated eight billion ash trees in the United States and all, potentially, could be lost due to EAB. The Arboretum Community Trees Program advocates for programs and practices that seek to maintain a robust urban forest canopy, in part by channeling resources to aid local communities.

The Morton Arboretum is a world-renowned leader in tree science and education, working to save and plant trees. The 1,700-acre outdoor museum features magnificent collections of 4,117 kinds of trees, shrubs, and other plants from around the world. The Arboretum's beautiful natural landscapes, gardens, research and education programs, and year-round family activities support its mission – the planting and conservation of trees and other plants for a greener, healthier, and more beautiful world. Conveniently located at I-88 and Rte. 53 in Lisle, Illinois, the Arboretum is open 7 days a week, 365 days a year, from 7 a.m. Central Time until sunset. The Children's Garden is open from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., March through October, and 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., November through February. Visit Press Room at www.mortonarb.org, call to learn more.

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