

Facilities Services Advisory Committee (OFSAC) Minutes (Special Meeting) – October 2, 2008

Members Present: Larry Baker, Chair, Elizabeth Bird, Michael Dean, Heidi Gagnon, Ed Sondeno, Richard Smith, Sandy Sward

Members Absent: Robert Carson, Alan George, Rick Hixson, Chris Jenkins, Tom Morrison, Melanie Stocks

Others Present: Jon Ford, Bob Lashaway

1. Mountain Pine Bark Beetle Infestation Management Proposal

The special meeting of the Advisory Committee was called to inform members of a situation that Facilities has recently become aware of, involving a large number of pine trees on campus. Members were provided background information prior to the meeting by Jon Ford. There is an unprecedented wave of Mountain Pine Bark Beetle migrating east from the west coast. Mountain Pine Bark Beetles are always present but are normally kept in check with predatory beetles, woodpeckers, cold weather and good hydration of the trees. Approximately every 30 to 50 years, conditions arise where they are able to proliferate, and this wave appears to be the most prolific ever seen. It is not as common for the beetles to migrate this far east because of the cold weather, however due to warmer climate, drought conditions, and aging forests, our trees have become susceptible. In addition, the beetles have attacked urban forests in a larger degree and faster than anticipated.

Once attacked, trees will take approximately 6-8 months to look like they are dying. The beetles prefer pine but will also attack Spruce and Douglas Fir in a heavily infested area. Scotch Pines are the most susceptible. The MSU Campus has over 100 trees that are infected.

After an attack and a tree is full, the beetles will release a pheromone that says the tree is full. That pheromone has been identified and is marketed under the trade name of "Verbamone". One of the plans is to place pouches of the Verbamone on trees that have not been attacked, however this only works approximately one third of the time. There is also a very strong spray available to help protect uninfected trees, however it has a tendency to drift and also kills bees. Scientists recommend an aggressive management plan of cutting down the trees with the wood being burned, debarked or buried since the beetles can continue their life cycle in the cut wood unless it is debarked. Ideally, we could wait to cut trees since an exceptionally cold winter might slow down the infestation but waiting might also endanger uninfected trees.

Ford is working with Communications and Public Affairs to prepare a statement and is also working with an entomologist at Plant Bioscience who will be contacting a forester out of Missoula and a DNRC forester who will, in turn, prepare statements which will be incorporated into the statement from Communications and Public Affairs. Additional output of information includes:

- A website with links to authoritative sites;
- A news release on MSU Today;
- Pamphlets or posters to go on bulletin boards around Campus;
- Present information at an ASMSU meeting.

Members questioned whether it would be possible to use the wood for any purpose. Ford advised that the wood would need to be debarked and Facilities does not have the means of debarking the wood and it would not be wise to distribute the infected wood.

Committee members offered additional suggestions:

- A Campus forum in the SUB with a slide presentation to show the extent of the problem;
- Include Cliff Montagne/Campus Sustainability Advisory Committee (CSAC) and work with the CSAC on the recovery plan;
- Make sure the recovery plan is included in the information presented to Campus;
- Place a small card on trees that will not be immediately cut so that people will be able to see the evidence on the tree or a small placard in front of the tree;
- Include notations on the Campus Construction Map, where infected trees are located;
- Join forces with surrounding community to help curb the spread of the infestation;
- Turn the situation into an educational opportunity by including ecology, plant science, plant pathology, landscape architecture, or any group that may have some attachment to this issue;
- Inform the public of the first tree cuttings;
- Join forces with the City's effort.

Ford advised that they are in the very early stages of this investigation and at this time, actions are on hold until the communications plan is formulated. Ford will keep the Committee informed electronically of any developments. Once a management plan is in place, members will be requested to communicate that information back to constituents. Ford is also available to present information to groups as requested.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Morrison
Facilities Services