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Crews to Survey State's Rural and Urban Tree Resources

LINCOLN, Neb. & As part of the Great Plains Tree and Forest Invasives Initiative, 400 randomly selected plots across Nebraska will be visited to evaluate the state's tree resources.

Beginning the end of May, four, two-person crews will survey rural and urban plots across the state. Two of the crews each will visit 100 plots in the Lincoln and Omaha areas, while the other two crews will visit 200 rural and urban plots throughout the rest of the state.

Through the Great Plains Tree and Forest Invasives Initiative, state forestry agencies in Nebraska, Kansas, North Dakota and South Dakota are working together to prepare for the arrival of invasive species in the Great Plains. The agencies are assessing the region's tree resources, determining and addressing the potential impacts of invasives to those resources, creating public awareness of invasive species and promoting species diversity. The initiative is funded in part by a \$500,000 seed grant from the U.S. Forest Service.

Kansas, North Dakota and South Dakota also will be conducting surveys within their states.

Steve Rasmussen, NFS district forester and Great Plains Initiative coordinator, said invasive pests, such as emerald ash borer, pose a tremendous threat to the state's forest resources, and this inventory will increase the state's preparedness for invasive species.

"The survey will provide a clearer picture of species composition and distribution within Nebraska and throughout the northern plains states, helping identify areas most at risk to different invasive species," Rasmussen said. "This will allow forestry professionals to target efforts toward areas most at risk when invasive species arrive."

Plots were selected for each state by the U.S. Forest Service National Inventory and Monitoring Applications Center in Newtown Square, Pa. Each plot is one-sixth acre.

The number, species, diameter and height of trees within the plot and the use of land within the plot will be recorded. Observations also will be made about tree health based on the percent of canopy dieback within each tree. Information about distance from buildings will be recorded for energy computations. For rural plots the function of trees, such as windbreaks, will be recorded. Plots without trees will not be surveyed. Once collected, data will be sent to the U.S. Forest Service for analysis. Data will be analyzed for each individual state, as well as regionally to provide a picture of the tree and forest resources throughout the northern plains.

The information provided by this survey will be invaluable in helping natural resource professionals estimate economic impacts of invasive species, as well as the volume and location of wood that will be generated by trees lost to invasive pests.

Rasmussen said this is the first time these techniques, tools and software have been used for such an expansive inventory project and is the first inventory of its type in the Great Plains.

"There has never before been such a thorough inventory done on non-forest lands, like windbreaks, shelterbelts, wildlife areas, narrow riparian tree belts and other smaller treed areas, in the Great Plains," said Rasmussen. "It is exciting that Nebraska and the other three states will have a chance to use this new technology and perhaps be a part of developing a new methodology for use in other parts of the country."

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