

To: Senate Environmental Finance Committee
Committee Chair, Senator Ingebrigtsen
1150 Minnesota Senate Building

From: Jeff Haberman
City of Rochester MN
City Forester

March 9, 2022

Thank you Mr. Chair and Committee members. My name is Jeff Haberman and I am the city forester for the city of Rochester.

The Rochester City Council adopted a legislative priority for 2022 that supports state funding to support emerald ash borer management and urban forestry. Rochester is uniquely prepared to plant trees to address areas in need of environmental justice. We recently completed a canopy cover assessment across our city. The project resulted in an interactive web based map that allows us see where we have low canopy cover and find areas in need of trees in order to address specific objectives. Objectives include planting trees to address stormwater runoff, air quality, underserved populations and human health issues and more. We have already begun planting trees to address environment injustices.

Rochester has been actively managing Emerald ash Borer since found here in 2016. A random sample inventory done in 2010 indicated ash comprised 15% of the total canopy cover city wide. The loss of these trees is significantly impacting our community both environmentally and financially. In 2016 our tree inventory included 6,000 ash trees. These trees existed along our streets and in developed areas of our parks. Many more existed in our natural areas where we had no inventory data.

Currently we have 4000 trees being chemically protected in our city. Protecting these trees preserves the community benefits provided by these trees. Benefits include storm water mitigation, pollution reduction, energy savings, urban heat island mitigation, carbon sequestration and increased property values just to name a few. According to I-tree Canopy the 4090 ash tree in our inventory store 2300 tons of carbon, a value of \$400,000 and provide \$30,000 dollars in stormwater, pollution and carbon reduction annually.

Our EAB management plan estimated a 5.5 million dollar cost to implement. To date Rochester has spent more than 2,000,000 dollars on EAB management and we have removed an estimated 4-5,000 ash trees on public property alone. Rochester has worked hard to take advantage of the EAB funding available from the State of Minnesota. Since 2016, the city has secured more than 400,000 dollars in grant money to help realize our EAB management goals. Senator Ingebrigtsen I want to thank you specifically for your work in bringing this bill forward and I hope all committee members understand how important this issue is to the state of Minnesota. The recent appropriations are the very reason we have not fallen behind on our tree replacement goals. The grants we have been awarded have helped support our tree removal and replacement program, our ash tree injection program and provided us with additional human resources through the Green Corps and Forestry Corps programs. The City of Rochester is not able to meet the estimated budget needed to implement our EAB management

plan. The estimated budget for years 2020-2022 is 1.8 million dollars, actual funding provided during this timeframe is \$450,000. This funding initiative is so very critical to all communities across the state. Currently we are in year 6 of our 20 year management plan and obviously still have a long way to go in our EAB management efforts.

There is an equally devastating problem occurring on private property. The city stopped intervening in EAB management on private property in 2019 and the impact is being felt. Wood debris has reached un-manageable volumes. The majority of our wood waste facilities are full and not accepting any more wood waste. This is causing some to resort to burning the waste as there are no other financially feasible ways to get rid of it. The city is currently collaborating with Olmsted County to identify solutions to this wood waste problem.

I hope that you will continue to find ways to provide financial assistance to communities to address all of the challenges we face in the management of Emerald Ash Borer. Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions to the best of my ability.

Respectfully
Jeff Haberman

