



OS I-01

## **Assessing urban forest visitor responses to Emerald Ash Borer impacts & management: A Minnesota example**

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Extensive outbreaks of the emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*; EAB) are having major impacts on the ecosystem services of forests. While environmental and economic research on EAB abounds, social research relating to cultural ecosystem services, such as recreation and aesthetics, is limited. To address this gap, multiple methods solicited visitors' perceptions of EAB-impacted forests in an urban setting. First, interviews assessed how visitors responded to EAB-impacted landscapes. Second, a photo-based questionnaire was designed to simulate different levels of EAB impact and management treatments relative to other physical and social site attributes. Results from a sample of visitors to Fort Snelling State Park in Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN indicated visitors have varied responses to EAB impacts, visitation may be impacted but the relative impact of EAB is less important than surrounding viewscape development and visitor numbers. Specifically, stated choice modelling revealed respondents preferred dense trailside shrub vegetation and few trail users and disliked viewsapes showing city buildings and removal of most ash trees. As such, results suggest trail planning should not only consider near-view landscape impacts but also the visual quality of more distant viewsapes, and that urban forest managers need to be aware of how forest insect impacts and subsequent management responses affect recreation setting preferences.

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