



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WSDA proposes gypsy moth eradication treatment for Puyallup, Eatonville sites

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) announced today a proposal to treat two sites in Pierce County next spring to eliminate introductions of the destructive European gypsy moth.

One project would be a repeat treatment in Puyallup at South Hill Mall. The site to be treated would be expanded from 29 acres to 43 acres to help ensure the gypsy moth introduction is eradicated. The second site, some 13 acres, would be in Eatonville near Eatonville Highway and Hillgoss Rd. State entomologists have concluded a reproducing population of gypsy moth exists at both sites.

This is the first time since 2005 that WSDA has proposed two sites in the same year for treatment to combat gypsy moth.

WSDA conducted three ground-spray operations at South Hill Mall in Puyallup last April and May after catching seven gypsy moths at the site during the agency's regular summer trapping efforts in 2010. Entomologists have since found a continuing population of gypsy moth at South Hill Mall. Ten gypsy moths, detected in trapping this summer in Puyallup, were found at the mall or nearby. In August, four gypsy moth caterpillars were discovered there and in late November surveyors discovered a viable gypsy moth egg mass at the site.

“A wet and unusually cool spring delayed some gypsy moth caterpillars from emerging in time for our spray treatments to be totally effective at South Hill Mall,” said Jim Marra, WSDA managing entomologist. “Our record of achieving eradication after treatment in one year is very good but there have been cases where a second-year treatment is necessary.”

In late September trappers recovered two gypsy moths in Eatonville. One of the moths was alive, which entomologists say is the latest time in program history for finding a live moth. WSDA staff also found two viable egg masses and pupal cases, additional verification of a reproducing population.

This year's weather conditions caused managers to extend the time period for WSDA trapping inspections and final removal of the traps. Trappers normally complete their work by the end of September but this year were kept on until Oct. 27.

If approved, the treatments for gypsy moth will take place in April and May 2012. Three to five applications of a biological insecticide will be applied to trees, shrubs and other vegetation, three to 14 days apart.

WSDA will comply with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and the National Environmental

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Policy Act (NEPA) before deciding whether or not to approve the proposals. WSDA will consult with state and federal agencies and prepare two documents for public review and comment that assess the impact of the proposal on the environment. The two documents are a completed SEPA checklist and a NEPA draft environmental assessment.

The insecticide WSDA is proposing to use is *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki* (Btk), a biological insecticide used in the past to keep the gypsy moth out of Washington. Btk is registered for use in the U.S. by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and is found naturally in the environment.

Community open houses in Puyallup and Eatonville are being planned. Location of the open houses will be announced later.

Gypsy moth has been detected in Washington every year since 1977, but permanent populations have not been established because of the state's aggressive trapping and eradication programs. This summer, WSDA's trappers set more than 17,000 small cardboard traps—placing them in neighborhoods, business districts, ports and rural areas across the state to nip any infestation in the bud.

The traps feature sticky-substance snares scented with a non-toxic synthetic pheromone that attracts male moths. Sixteen gypsy moths were found, including 13 in Pierce County (10 in Puyallup, two in Eatonville, one in Black Diamond); two in King County (Skyway and Seattle's Leshi neighborhood); and one in Snohomish County near the Everett waterfront.

For more information on the gypsy moth, call the agency's toll-free hotline (1-800-443-6684) or visit the WSDA gypsy moth website at <http://agr.wa.gov/Plantsinsects/InsectPests/GypsyMoth/>. The website includes maps of the proposed treatment sites in Puyallup and Eatonville.

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