



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Declared Public Nuisance *Declaration helps protect native hemlocks from insect infestation*

FRANKFORT, Ky. – (Jan. 5, 2011) –Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet Secretary Leonard K. Peters has issued a Declaration of Public Nuisance officially declaring the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) a public nuisance to Kentucky's forests. The declaration not only directs the Kentucky Division of Forestry to protect and preserve forest resources from HWA infestations, it also provides the authority to seek and utilize public and private funds for projects associated with saving Kentucky's hemlock trees.

"This declaration will assist the division in controlling and managing one of the biggest insect threats to Kentucky's forests, which contain 76.6 million eastern hemlock trees," said Secretary Peters. "The potential for HWA to destroy hemlock populations would have a profound impact on forest ecosystems. Fortunately, this declaration will help secure funding from public and private entities for the early detection, eradication and prevention of this nuisance species."

Since 2006, HWA infestations have been found in 15 Kentucky counties. The insect, which feeds on the hemlock's needles and reproduces exponentially throughout the warm seasons, has the potential to spread rapidly and kill the tree if it is not treated in a timely manner. Many experts believe that the adverse effects from HWA could be as severe as the chestnut blight, and that we may lose our hemlocks just as we lost the American chestnut tree.

Eastern hemlocks provide aesthetic beauty, critical habitat for a variety of species, and perhaps most importantly, dense foliage that protects our streams from the sun's harsh rays. The shade regulates water temperatures and provides higher oxygen

levels for rare species of fish such as the blackside dace. The loss of hemlock trees would not only affect the environment, it would also have a negative effect on tourism and recreation. As vast stands of hemlocks in Red River Gorge and Pine Mountain succumb to HWA, the scenery and appeal of these unique areas would be lost.

For more information about how you can help protect our native hemlocks, visit Save Kentucky's Hemlocks website at www.kyhemlocks.org. Citizens are asked to notify forestry officials of infestations by contacting KDF's main office at 502-564-4496.

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