



Park's hemlocks treated against pest

Adopt-A-Tree campaign begins to raise money for treatments

CORBIN — By Jeff Noble / Staff writer

The battle against the hemlock wooly adelgid in the forest at Cumberland Falls State Resort Park has been won—for now—by the volunteers.

Because the turnout was greater than organizers expected, the volunteer group Cumberland Falls Friends is starting a new campaign to continue treatments to the trees, preventing the bug from infesting and killing them. And they'd like for you to help, by adopting a tree.

The park's Trail Maintenance Supervisor, Pam Gibson, was highly pleased with the effort done earlier this month.

"It went wonderfully. There were 815 trees treated during the week of Jan. 9, and we had about a dozen people helping to treat the trees with chemicals that will kill the hemlock wooly adelgid. The treatments were done along the nature trail part of the park in McCreary County, and the work was done in four days," Gibson told the Times-Tribune.

Of those trees treated, Gibson noted 327 of them were along Trail 9, the Eagle Falls Trail, with the rest being along Trail 10, the Blue Bend Trail.

"The largest tree we treated was 41 inches in diameter, breast high (DBH), which is how those trees are measured. We got a lot more done than anticipated, and we ran out of supplier quicker than we thought," said Alice Mandt, with the Kentucky Division of Forestry in Pineville and Frankfort.

A total of 290 packets of chemicals were used, which Gibson said will make a big difference to not just those trees at the park now, but for generations of trees to follow.

"The chemical we use goes down to the tree's roots. It's taken into the tree, reaches the needles, and kills the bugs. The treatment lasts five years. If the tree is treated three times every five years, it's protected for life, and the seeds are also protected. As a result, new trees that come from those trees we have now are also protected."

What has Gibson and volunteers really happy are when the future trees germinate, as a result of the spraying.

"Because those trees were treated, there's an 80 percent germination rate. That's outstanding."

The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid is a destructive little aphid-like bug that gets its meals by sucking the sap off the tree. The bug attaches itself to the hemlock needles on the tree, and kills it.

A native of east Asia, the adelgid spread to the North American continent in 1924, and worked its way to America by the middle of the last century. In 1951, the pest was first reported near Richmond, Va. In recent years, the adelgid has become a major problem to hemlock trees in the eastern United States, establishing itself in portions of 16 states, running up the East Coast from Maine to Georgia.

The first sighting of the bug in Kentucky was in 2006, and two years later, the adelgid was first spotted in the Daniel Boone National Forest. The adelgid's work is identified by the presence of egg sacs that look like small

pieces of cotton hanging to hemlock branches' undersides. In addition, the color of the hemlock tree stricken by the adelgid is noticeable. While a healthy hemlock has a lush, dark green color, a tree bitten by the bug has a grayish-green look to it.

But while the spraying of some trees earlier this month was a success, the volunteers helping to protect the forest have run out of chemicals, and money. Which is why the "Adopt-a-Tree" campaign is starting, according to Gibson and Mandt.

Partners in this campaign include the Daniel Boone National Forest, Friends of Cumberland Falls, the Kentucky Department of Parks, the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission and the Kentucky Division of Forestry.

"People who'd like to help out can adopt one of the trees that need to be sprayed. We'll take measurements and we'll even take their picture with the tree they adopted, if they'd like," Gibson pointed out.

Mandt explained further. "We had planned on spraying some more trees next week, but we ran out of chemicals. We're now hoping to do that during this spring. We'd like to raise funds to continue treating along the Blue Bend Trail."

If you'd like to adopt a tree in the forest at Cumberland Falls State Resort Park, or need more information, call Gibson at the park at (606) 528-4121, extension 414. You can also call toll-free at 1-800-325-0063, and ask for Gibson in Recreation. Gibson can also be reached via email at equineangel11@gmail.com.

Mandt can be contacted at the Kentucky Division of Forestry's website at www.forestry.ky.gov, or at www.kyhemlocks.org.