

## **Report to Selectboard from the Resilient Roads Committee**

**December 19, 2019**

### **Background**

The East Montpelier Selectboard created the Rural Road Vegetation Assessments Committee in the summer of 2017 when the Town received a grant for a rural roadside vegetation assessment. Joanne Garton with the Urban & Community Forestry Program of the VT Dept. of Forests, Parks, and Recreation served as project leader. With assistance from the Committee, Joanne inventoried rural roadside vegetation and developed recommendations for long-term maintenance of its roadside vegetation to manage stormwater runoff, maintain or improve wildlife habitat, and plan for the future of scenic and culturally important roadside hedgerows and forests. The draft plan, Rural Road Resilient Right-of-Ways Vegetation Assessment is available on the Town website

### **Focus on Emerald Ash Borer in 2019**

The committee has taken the lead on the development of an action plan for dealing with the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), a non-native, invasive insect that is expected to kill most ash trees across Vermont. Once trees are infested, they die quickly and the wood becomes very brittle, creating potential hazards along roadsides and near homes. The insect was first detected in Vermont in February 2018. Although it has been detected in nearby towns and the City of Montpelier, it has not been detected in East Montpelier as yet.

In early summer 2019, citizen volunteers inventoried all the ash trees, 6-inch diameter and larger, within the town road rights of way as the first step in developing the action plan. With assistance from CVRPC funded through a grant, the Committee has been developing a Roadside Ash Tree Management Plan (draft is on the Town website). Approaches will include public education, prioritizing removal of trees that are now in fair or poor condition or hanging over roadsides, treating distinctive “historic trees”, and initiating a pilot project at U-32. The Committee is coordinating with Washington Electric Coop, who is actively removing ash along East Montpelier’s roadways. It also has been in contact with Green Mountain Power.

### **Projects**

The Committee is currently applying for a \$15,000 grant (with equal town match) to fund a pilot project at U-32 on Gallison Hill Road. The project will include removing approximately 17 large roadside ash trees, and replacing several ash trees on the U-32 campus that were part of the landscaping during the school renovations. The project may extend to other nearby areas of Gallison Hill Road, Wheeler Road and Schoolhouse Road if the funding allows. On January 13, the Committee will hold a public forum and hearing. The Forum will provide information about the threats associated with EAB, and how the Committee proposes to address it. It will also provide an opportunity for public input on how they would like us to proceed. The hearing will be conducted by the tree warden, as is required by law, and will address only the removal the specific trees associated with the pilot project.