

THE MUNICIPALITY OF LAMBTON SHORES

Report CAO-06-2020

Council Meeting Date: November 10, 2020

TO: Mayor Weber and Members of Council
FROM: Kevin Williams, Chief Administrative Officer
RE: Gypsy Moth Outbreak

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report CAO 06-2020 regarding the 2020 Gypsy Moth Outbreak be received; and

THAT staff develop a resource page on the Lambton Shores website in order to share third party information related to the lifecycle and management of the pest including the location and nature of any known neighbourhood-planned gypsy moth control initiatives on private property; and

THAT prior to January 31, 2021, the Municipality direct-mail all Lambton Shores property owners, to advise of available website resources and neighbourhood contact information in order that the property owner can make informed decisions that best fit their individual situation; and

THAT the municipality support the control of gypsy moth on lands adjacent to its own by not objecting to any third party BTK spray initiative; and

THAT the Municipality of Lambton Shores supports any known aerial BTK gypsy moth spray initiative by facilitating the necessary permissions/applications to the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks to enable alternate forms of notification and to Transport Canada to enable low flying aircraft.

SUMMARY

This report is provided as a follow up to Report CAO 05-2020, and provides an update on gypsy moth related activities being planned for 2021.

BACKGROUND

As reported in CAO 05-2020, a gypsy moth outbreak has been experienced in many areas across southern Ontario. Within Lambton Shores, the 2020 outbreak was most severe in the Port Franks, Deer Run, and Pinery Park areas of Lambton Shores, however evidence of gypsy moth is found across the municipality. The most affected area follows the Highway 21 corridor from Army Camp Road to Grand Bend in an area roughly bounded by the Lake Huron Shoreline and Goosemarsh Line.

At its meeting of June 23, 2020, Council received Report CAO05-2020 as well as another related piece of correspondence. Subsequently, Council passed the following resolution:

THAT the correspondence from Christine O'Reilly be received; and

THAT staff investigate options for gypsy moth control in consultation with other governmental and non-governmental organizations with affected lands in Lambton Shores; and

THAT, prior to December 1st, staff prepare a report to Council advising of any control plans being proposed by the consulted organizations, including opportunities for private property owners to participate in a 2021 gypsy moth control program. Carried 20-0623-12

Further to Council's resolution, staff has been in contact with a number of organizational land stewards in Lambton Shores. These include:

- The County of Lambton
- The Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Kettle and Stony Point First Nation
- The Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority
- Pinery Provincial Park
- Scouts Canada Camp Attawanderon
- Ministry of Transportation

At this time, none of these land stewards has indicated any specific 2021 plans for large scale gypsy moth control activity on their lands. Attachment 1 is a report provided to the ABCA Board of Directors on October 15th indicating that they may consider some sort of "good neighbour" program for areas immediately adjacent to affected residential areas. County Staff have indicated that they may also consider some sort of buffer spraying near the perimeter of the County Forest, and more likely consider an aerial spray application over the forested parcel at the corner of Highway 21 and Greenway Road that hosts the County Museum. The County forester has been in contact with staff in both Plympton Wyoming and North Middlesex, neither of which has indicated that they are planning municipal control programs. The South Huron CAO has also

indicated that they also have no municipal control program planned for 2021. The CEO for Kettle and Stoney Point advises that they have no plans for control.

On October 7th, the Invasive Species Centre hosted a second gypsy moth seminar with Taylor Scarr of the Canadian Forest Service and Dan Rowlinson of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. This was in follow up to an earlier seminar that was recorded and subsequently shared with Council. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A70AoBORNQ4>) A recording of last month's seminar has not been made available but some of the information provided includes:

What causes outbreaks?

- Abundant hosts (Oaks, maples, pine, spruce)
- Warm winter
- Deep snow
- Hot dry spring/summer
- Stressed trees
- Period of low defoliation and low abundance of natural predators

What causes collapse of outbreak?

- Trees develop tougher/less nutritious leaves
- Cold winter
- Predation from parasites
- Increase in Fungal and Viral pathogens

The presentation noted that it is not realistic to expect any control program to eradicate the pest, but rather to assist in mortality of the larvae, in an attempt to keep any defoliation rates below 50% until such times as natural factors and predators more significantly collapse the population.

The methods being considered for control should be based on the objective. For example, is the concern related to the protection of ornamental trees and landscape features, forest ecology, commercial wood supply, for a few trees or many.

Accordingly, there are a number of control options available to those who choose:

- Egg mass removal prior to hatch
- Banding and capture of caterpillars
- Systemic insecticide injections
- Ground based spray application
- Aerial spray application
- Promote tree health through watering and fertilizing.
- Do nothing

The “take home” messages from the seminar included the following:

- Gypsy Moth is not a native pest but it needs to be managed like other native species
- It is very difficult to predict population levels from year to year
- Pest Management initiatives are like insurance – and depend on individual risk tolerance
- Control methods will not drive the outbreak to zero – they just reduce numbers in order to enable natural predators/parasites to take effect.
- There is no doubt that gypsy moth is a nuisance to many landowners – and causes varying levels of stress to trees

In September, staff was invited to participate in a video conferencing call with a number of neighbourhood organizers/advocates for aerial spraying. These include:

- Beach o' Pines
- Huron Woods
- Southcott Pines
- Wee Lake
- Pinery Bluffs
- Deer Run Estates
- Walker Woods
- Port Franks
- Dalton
- Harbour Park Court
- Oakwood Park (South Huron)
- Yacht Club Woods

The individuals on the call indicated that there was general support for aerial spraying in their neighbourhoods, and they had been distributing related information as well as application/waiver forms provided by Zimmer Air Services as part of their required pre-spray planning.

Although the neighbourhood groups have been moving toward a self-organized aerial spray, some participants were also looking for the municipality to clarify what actions it would or would not be taking before they continued their organizational efforts.

Staff has assisted some organizers by providing subdivision lot plans to help advocates to keep track of neighbourhood interest by property owner. (Attachment 2 is provided as an example) Some neighbourhood organizers have noted that they are having difficulty making contact with seasonal/absent/vacant property owners. Freedom of Information legislation prevents the municipality from providing such information directly to the organizers. To address this challenge, it is a recommendation of this report that a municipal notice can be sent directly to each property owner on file, including background information on the gypsy moth issue and inviting them to make direct contact the neighbourhood contact or a pesticide applicator.

The Municipality of Lambton Shores has limited land holdings in the area currently affected by Gypsy Moth. Primary areas of public (park) use include:

- The Port Franks Marina property
- The Port Franks Community Centre property
- Klondyke Park

There are small treed areas in each of these locations that show signs of caterpillar damage in 2020. Attachment 3 is provided to highlight the relativity of the municipality's small holdings compared to the larger forest blocks and privately owned lands.

The municipality carries a \$75,000 budget for contracted tree services, a large portion of which has been used to deal with the removal of Ash trees killed by the Emerald Ash Borer on municipal lands. As the ash tree removal program winds down, staff feel that this budget should be sufficient to include any required gypsy moth control measures in municipal parks or "neighbourly" land holdings such as unopened road allowances in support of adjacent private property owner initiatives.

The balance of the area seeing impact from gypsy moth is comprised of privately owned residential, commercial, and agricultural lots. Lot sizes vary considerably as does tree cover on those properties. Gypsy moth damage in 2020 ranges from negligible to severe defoliation. As stated earlier, there is no way to absolutely predict impact of the pest in 2021.

In 2020, there were a small number of property owners known to have contracted aerial spraying of BTK for their own interests. Many of these properties are larger seasonal home and trailer park operators and they have indicated their satisfaction with 2020 initiatives and their intention to contract for similar services again in 2021. In order to support the effort of any property owner choosing to protect their own trees from gypsy moth, the municipality can adopt a position of waiving any objection to control methods that may indirectly affect municipal property such possible overspray from the aerial application of BTK onto the public road allowance.

Staff have also talked with Zimmer Air to ask if/how the municipality can assist both the operator and the property owner in undertaking an aerial spray program. Suggestions include:

- providing assistance with public notifications of spray activity leading up to and at the time of application, including making application to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks for approval of an "alternate means of notification", on behalf of the applicator and landowners, and
- not objecting to the aerial application of BTK on lands immediately adjacent to municipal property, and
- providing Transport Canada with permission/support from the Municipality to enable low flying aircraft for the purposes of the spray application.

ALTERNATIVES TO CONSIDER

This report was written to address Council's resolution of June 23, 2020 and outlines a number of consultations and alternative actions for gypsy moth control.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Despite the inability to affect the outbreak of gypsy moth that has impacted much of southern Ontario, the Municipality can consider protecting its own resources for public use, and can provide assistance to property owners who wish to help themselves.

The Municipality is well equipped to assist with related public education through its existing website and social media resources. Additionally, the municipality can place information directly in the hands of its property owners through direct mail or inserts in other municipal mailings.

The Municipality can also assist in the coordination of control methods – share information between advocacy groups, coordinate community contacts, and establish a registry of known control companies interested in servicing the residents of Lambton Shores.

In the event that a larger scale aerial spray is scheduled, the subscribers to the program will be aware, but others people new to or visiting the area may not be. Accordingly, the municipality can work with the aerial spray company to assist with public notifications as may be required by law. Additionally, the aerial applicator will be requesting that the municipality confirm with Transport Canada that it is in support of low flying aircraft during the times of treatment.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

If the Municipality undertakes a special direct-mail initiative to all 7,800 property owners, the cost will be \$10,000. This cost can be reduced if inserts are provided through existing utility billing cycles. The development of social media and/or website materials can be done through existing administrative resources.

CONSULTATION

Listed governmental and non-governmental organizations.
Paul Zimmer, Zimmer Air Services

ATTACHMENTS

1. ABCA Program Report of October 15, 2020
2. Dalton Subdivision and adjacent parcels
3. Distribution of lands