



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
City of Duluth Communications Office

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DATE: 06/09/2014

SUBJECT: MDA set to conduct Duluth gypsy moth eradication June 12

BY: Pakou Ly, Public Information Coordinator

MDA set to conduct Duluth gypsy moth eradication June 12
Treatment date will depend on weather and moth development

Duluth, Minn. – The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is preparing to treat approximately 1,200 acres of land in the city of Duluth to slow the spread of a gypsy moth infestation. Officials will conduct the treatments on Thursday, June 12, depending on weather conditions.

In 2013, the MDA's statewide gypsy moth monitoring program detected a localized infestation of the destructive tree pest. The treatment area is located in West Duluth, in an area approximately bordered by Roosevelt Street on the north, the St. Louis River on the east and south, and two blocks west of Highway 23 on the west (see attached map).

To slow the growth of the infestation, officials will conduct two aerial applications of *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki* (Btk) over the same area, spaced 5-10 days apart. Btk is approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and has very low risk for humans or animals other than caterpillars. Btk is formed by naturally-occurring bacteria and is widely used within the organic gardening community. Btk is applied by airplane and sticks to the tree canopy. As the gypsy moth caterpillars eat the leaves, the insect ingests the bacteria and stops the caterpillars from doing any more damage.

Since 2004, MDA has participated in the national Slow the Spread of Gypsy Moth program directed by the U.S. Forest Service. The majority of its resources have been focused on protecting the forests of the North Shore which are most at risk as gypsy moth spreads westward into the state. A similar Btk treatment was done in Duluth in 2011. The effort protects forest health, property values and the state's tourism industry.

Gypsy moths are among America's most destructive tree pests, having caused millions of dollars in damage to forests in the eastern U.S. The moths are common in Wisconsin and are now moving into Minnesota. If present in large numbers, gypsy moth caterpillars can defoliate large sections of forest. Oak, poplar, birch and willow are among their preferred hosts.

To help area citizens stay informed, the MDA has set up an Arrest the Pest Hotline at 888-545-MOTH (6684). The hotline will offer the latest details about treatment dates and times. Updates before, during and after the treatments will also be given on MDA's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/mnagriculture) and MDA's Twitter account (twitter.com/mnagriculture). MDA's website (www.mda.state.mn.us/gypsymoth) also has information about gypsy moth and control efforts.

The MDA offers the following tips to residents in and around the treatment area:

- For the moth treatment to work, it must begin early in the morning. Residents may be awakened on that day by the noise of the low-flying airplane. MDA apologizes for any inconvenience;
- The airplane noise may frighten pets, so residents may wish to keep them indoors during the treatment;
- The treatment product has no known health effects for humans, but to avoid it residents may wish to stay indoors during the treatment and keep windows closed for a half hour after application; and,
- The residue may accumulate on your car, outdoor play equipment or yard furniture. Simply spray off the items shortly afterward.

Media Advisory:

What: The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) will conduct the gypsy moth eradication treatment on approximately 1,200 acres of land in the city of Duluth on Thursday, June 12, assuming weather conditions remain favorable. The treatment will focus on the West Duluth neighborhood. Members of the media are invited to the staging area for video and photograph opportunities, and interviews with MDA staff.

Where: The staging area for the Duluth treatment area will be the Richard I. Bong Memorial Airport, located at 4804 Hammond Road, Superior, WI 54880.

When: Thursday, June 12, 2014

5:30 a.m. – 7:00 a.m. (Times are approximate and are dependent on weather conditions.)

Who: Members of MDA's Gypsy Moth Unit will be available to answer questions about the treatment and operations.

NOTE: For media inquiries on the day of the event, please call 651-387-6599.

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2014 Gypsy Moth Treatment Block - btk

