

**Testimony - U.S. House Interior-Environment Appropriations Bill Fiscal Year 2021**  
**Mary Hurliman, Public Works Director**  
**City of Woodbury**  
**February 24, 2020**

Thank you for the invitation to provide testimony regarding priority environmental challenges in the City of Woodbury. My name is Mary Hurliman, Public Works Director for the City of Woodbury. The two areas I would like to highlight in my testimony are the impacts of Emerald Ash Borer on the City of Woodbury and the East Metro Water quality and quantity challenges due to PFAS contamination.

**EAB**

Emerald Ash Borer, EAB, was first detected in Woodbury in August 2017. Since that time, city forestry staff have redirected all of their attention from maintaining and improving the City's canopy cover and efforts to reach our goal of 40 percent canopy cover by 2040 (currently 23 percent and falling), to removing Ash trees. In the last three years alone, the city staff have removed 497 ash trees from city property. This leaves 1,750 inventoried publicly maintained ash trees remaining in the city. Trees are inventoried if they are on boulevard maintained by city staff (only a small portion of our total boulevard) or in maintained/heavily trafficked park or trail corridors. Trees located in non-city maintained boulevard, wooded park areas and private property are not inventoried.

All ash trees (inventoried or not) will need to be eventually removed or treated every 2-3 years. Failing ash trees pose a risk to public safety and property. If an ash tree dies from EAB infestation, the tree becomes brittle and hazardous. Traditional removal methods are not possible for these trees which can make it more difficult to protect private property and public safety during the removal process. For these reasons, infested ash trees should be removed before the tree dies.

The redirect from traditional maintenance has caused city staff to fall short of their annual goal to insect and prune 25 percent of the city maintained trees annually; in 2019 only 11 percent of the cities canopy was maintained. Additionally, the City of Woodbury will be challenged to meet its 40 percent canopy cover by 2040, as we remove mature trees and plant them with saplings.

In 2020, the City of Woodbury had to increase the forestry budget by \$225,000 and add an additional staff member in order to meet the additional workload burden of EAB. For Woodbury, we anticipate needing to deal with the Emerald Ash Borer challenge until 2025, in best-case scenarios, in order to ensure public safety. The continued tree removal and neglect of our canopy as we deal with this incredible challenge will be something the community will have to endure for many years to come.

Commissioner Reinhart made an excellent point about the benefit of tree disease research, while EAB is what we're dealing with now – it's not the first tree disease we've been forced to manage and will likely not be the last.

**Water Quality**

The number one, immediate, environmental challenge for the City of Woodbury is water quality and quantity due to PFAS waste disposed by 3M in various locations in Washington County. Woodbury has been forced to take seven of its 19 wells off line to date and significantly reduce

pumping capacity. The city is moving full speed ahead on implementing a temporary water treatment plant for operation in summer 2020 to treat some of the impacted wells to help meet demand capacity. Adequate financial assistance from the State and 3M for temporary treatment is needed.

Temporary treatment will help in the short term, until long-term treatment solutions are determined and implemented, and the 3M/state of MN settlement money is distributed.

If the city is not able to secure adequate funding to meet its treatment needs through the settlement agreement, Woodbury residents may shoulder the burden of the contamination. Additionally, the settlement money is estimated to address up to 20 years of operations and maintenance of the treatment plant. After 20 years, will the residents of the future be responsible for maintaining treatment they previously had not needed? The City of Woodbury is working hand-in-hand with state agencies to determine solutions but city staff are becoming increasingly concerned that the \$720 million remaining settlement dollars will not be adequate to implement the capital projects and needed O&M to support the East Metro community water quality, going in to the future.

Madame Chair that concludes my remarks and thank you for the opportunity to testify.