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NEWS RELEASE

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Officials Discover Hemlock Pest in the Hocking Hills Region

COLUMBUS, OH – The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) today announced the discovery of a hemlock-killing pest in the Hocking Hills region. Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) is a small, aphid-like insect native to Asia that threatens the health and sustainability of eastern hemlock and Carolina hemlock in the eastern United States.

A relatively small infestation was recently discovered at Cantwell Cliffs in Hocking Hills State Park as part of a joint ODNR and ODA forest health survey program. An extensive survey of the immediate surrounding area has been conducted, and no additional trees have been found.

“Hemlock trees are abundant in Hocking County, and we have been checking this region for HWA for years,” said Robert Boyles, chief of the ODNR Division of Forestry. “Since the HWA was found early and was affecting a relatively small area, there are more options available to limit its damage and spread.”

Plans for dealing with this pest are currently being formulated, but multiple chemical and non-chemical treatment options are being explored. These include treatments such as foliar sprays of horticultural oils or insecticidal soaps, systemic insecticides and biological control. After further survey of the areas surrounding the site of infestation, state and federal officials will determine an appropriate course of action.

ODA will expand its hemlock quarantine to include Hocking County. Ohio regulations that cover the transportation of hemlock materials restrict any hemlock plant material from counties known to be infested from entering non-infested counties in Ohio. The ODA Plant Pest Control Program urges citizens to use caution when transporting wood materials to help protect against the artificial spread of insect pests.

HWA was first reported in the eastern United States in 1951 near Richmond, Va. By 2005, it was established in portions of 16 states from Maine to Georgia, where infestations covered about half of the range of hemlock. It was first reported in natural stands of hemlock in Ohio in January 2012 in Meigs County.

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