

Gypsy Moth Update

(Note: the gypsy moth action group is separate from the WLA. Information is being provided as a service to the Winans Lake community.)

The gypsy moths are here this summer and will be back next spring. An action committee of neighbors formed and has met twice to explore options and come up with a strategy to take out the gypsy moths next spring before they can create chaos with their frass (caterpillar poop), destroy trees, and affect even more neighbors and trees around Winans Lake.

Gretchen Voyle, a 30-year employee of the Livingston County MSU Extension Service and gypsy moth expert, educated the committee and interested residents on ways of dealing with the moths when an infestation is so extreme. Arborist Jeremy Hertz and a representative of MSU Extension Service who saw this year's infestation said it was the worst outbreak they had ever seen.

Doing nothing is not an option as the infestation has already spread and will continue to do so without intervention. The consensus of the 20 neighbors present at Gretchen's presentation was to spray the trees in the spring with *Bacillus Thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki* (Bt-k) to eliminate the majority of the moths. Bt is a naturally occurring soil bacteria that kills the caterpillars in the early stages of their development before they can eat so much of the canopy that it damages the trees. Bt-k is not dangerous to humans, pets, animals, or the environment.

By looking for egg masses and tree damage the action committee is also working to identify the area that has been infested by the gypsy moths. Egg masses have been found in the southwest area of Winans Lake – in trees:



The egg masses have also been found on sidewalks and foundations:



Once the infected area is identified, its perimeter can be expanded to ensure that the area we spray next spring will cover any caterpillars that might escape our detection. Each egg mass contains **1000-1500 future caterpillars**—that is a lot of frass and damage! The committee is also investigating the cost of aerial spraying and how to coordinate efforts to provide this information to Winans Lake and other nearby residents.

If we do nothing, we will be overrun by caterpillars. We risk losing many mature oaks that were defoliated this year and were weakened by growing a second set of leaves under drought conditions. *(Mary Anderson, coordinator)*

If you are interested in getting involved or learning more about the infestations, contact Mary at [maryanderson888 at msn dot com](mailto:maryanderson888@msn.com).