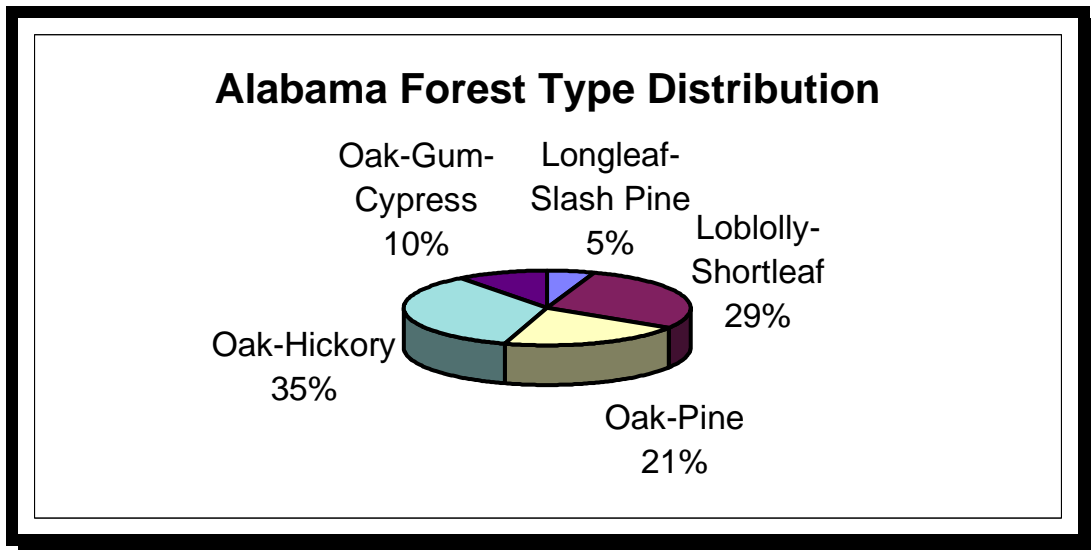
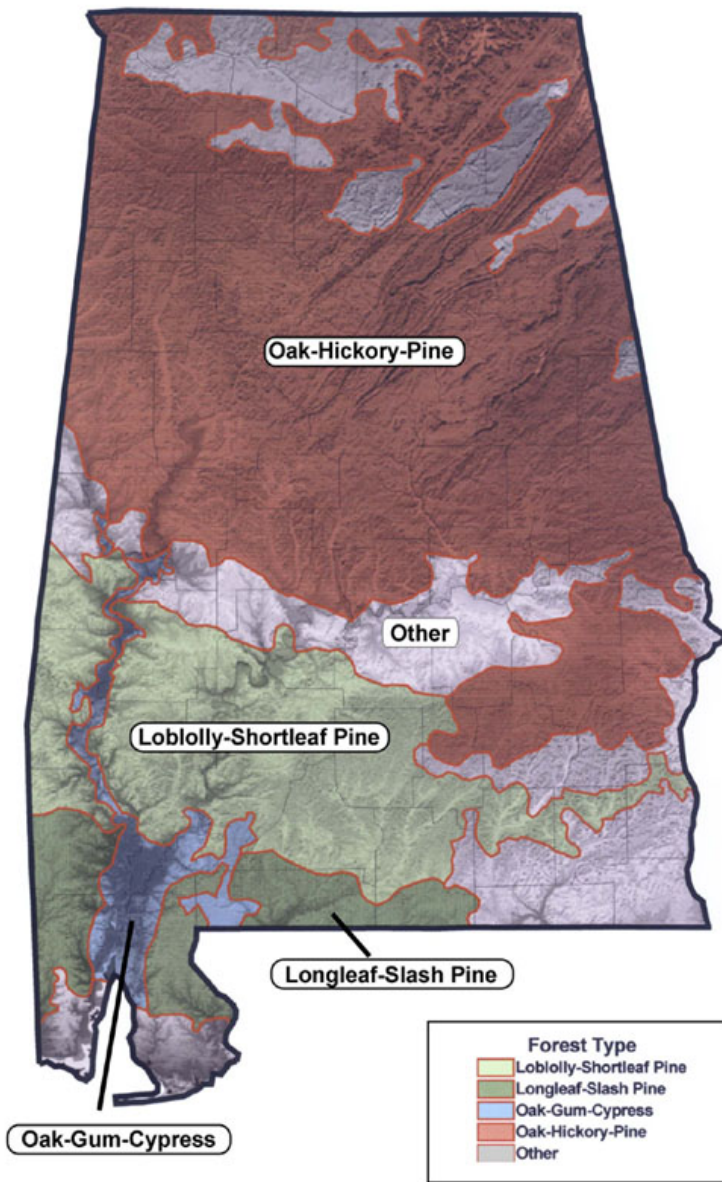


The Resource

Alabama's forests cover 22.9 million acres, more than 66% of the state's land area, the second largest in the nation. The majority of the state's forestland, approximately 78 percent, is owned by private landowners. Alabama's forests are prized for their diverse scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation. Alabama's emphasis on sustainable forests and wildlife habitat is evident from the Appalachian Mountain plateaus of the northeast to the flat sandy beaches of the Gulf Coast. Major forest types in the state include oak-hickory, loblolly-shortleaf pine, mixed oak-pine, and oak-gum-cypress. Longleaf-slash pine forests, historically much more wide-ranging, now comprise 5% of the state's forests.





- Water quality protection through greater use of best management practices
- Sustaining forest resources through wise private landowner stewardship

Forest Influences

Southern pine beetle (SPB) is Alabama's most problematic forest pest. The SPB infestation decreased in 2006 by approximately 32%, with 1,141 SPB spots detected in the August-September aerial survey. A total of 47 counties experienced SPB activity, with 18 in epidemic status. Activity was heaviest in southern counties. The state offers cost-share incentives to encourage landowners to thin as part of a SPB Prevention Program.

Pine engraver beetle (*Ips spp.*) activity in the Piedmont was minimal, with a slight increase in the northwestern part of the state. There was a notable increase in *Ips* activity in the southern part of the state, where hurricane damage and ocean (salt) spray weakened pines along the Gulf Coast. The 2006 drought also contributed to *Ips* activity. The *Ips* infestations will be monitored in 2007 because of ongoing host stress.

Fusiform rust is most prevalent in the upper coastal plain and the lower piedmont areas of Alabama (sometimes referred to as the blackbelt region). Genetic improvements of pine seedlings have reduced the occurrence of fusiform rust; however, it still causes serious infections on pines each year.

Littleleaf disease and loblolly decline cause significant losses in shortleaf and loblolly pine stands. A slight increase in loblolly decline was noted in the coastal plain; no changes were noted in incidence of littleleaf disease.

Annosum root disease infections increased somewhat, especially in the southern part of the state. Pine stands with root damage from hurricane winds or with *Ips* infestations were more susceptible to annosum root rot. Monitoring is needed in CRP plantations.

Dogwood anthracnose is a disease of cool, moist areas in the higher elevation forests of northern Alabama. Weather conditions were favorable for stabilizing this disease in 2006; no significant increase in dogwood anthracnose mortality was observed.

Oak decline became more evident in 2006, particularly in mature bottomland hardwood stands in southern counties. Latent hurricane damage and drought were contributing factors, with red oaks being most heavily impacted.

Weather often impacts Alabama's forests. Latent effects from 2004 and 2005 hurricanes continued to cause significant damage in 2006. This was exacerbated by drought, producing significant tree mortality, especially in southern counties.

Sudden Oak Death surveys were initiated in Alabama in 2004 and were conducted by pathologists from Mississippi State University. The surveys were focused on the perimeters of horticultural nurseries that received potentially infected stock from shippers in California. Seven previously established plots in high risk areas in the northern part of the state were also surveyed. None of the samples collected in Alabama indicated the presence of the *Phytophthora ramorum* pathogen.

Cogongrass has become the most concerned invasive, non-native plant species in Alabama. Infestation expansion has initiated the Invasive Plant Control Program of 2005. This program will end in September, 2007. Cogongrass has an adverse affect on vegetation reforestation, seedling survival, wildlife habitat, and timber management. Like most invasive species, cogongrass is difficult to control or eradicate. The largest areas of infestation occur in the southwestern part of the state.

Privet (Chinese or European) is very invasive and exist throughout the state of Alabama in contiguous stands or scattered clusters. Because of some wildlife benefits, this invasive

species is not considered high priority for control or eradication. It is difficult to control or eradicate this non-native species because of its regeneration capabilities. The Invasive Plant Control Program also addresses this species for control and eradication.

Chinese Tallowtree is an invasive non-native species that now occurs statewide.

Asiatic Bush Honeysuckle is encroaching on lands in and around the Monte Sano Preserve in Huntsville, Alabama. A collaborative effort has been implemented to control and eradicate this species. The Land Trust of Huntsville and North Alabama is initiating the efforts and was approved to receive funding from a federal grant to continue the control and eradication activities on and near the preserve.

Cost Share Programs

Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) Thinning Cost Share Program is a Federal program available to non-industrial private forest landowners to initiate preventive measures against SPB and to restore forest lands that have been impacted by SPB activity. Eligible landowners can receive funding not to exceed \$5,000 for single or combined selected management activities. This program also funds *Annosum* root disease treatments and encourages landowners to decrease residual basal area in pine stands and regenerate them with species best suited to the site.

Invasive Plant Control Program is also a Federally funded cost share program available to non-industrial private forest landowners to initiate control and eradication efforts against cogongrass, European and Chinese privet, and Chinese tallowtree in hurricane damaged stands. Eligible landowners may own from 10 to 5,000 acres, if at least 0.5 acre is infested. Landowners can receive \$75 per acre per year for two consecutive years.

Future Concerns

The state of Alabama is participating in the discussion about building an electricity/pulp plant in Linden, Marengo County. This new economic endeavor will create 400 new jobs. To supply this plant, however, 30,000 acres of bamboo (*Arundo Donax*) must be planted in the area. The main concern about this proposed project is that *Arundo Donax* is a non-native invasive species. There is not enough research to know the effects (adverse or otherwise) this species will oppose on Alabama's forests. Opposition and support for this project are approximately equal and a decision on the fate of project is not yet final.

Forest Health Assistance in Alabama

For further information or assistance, contact:

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