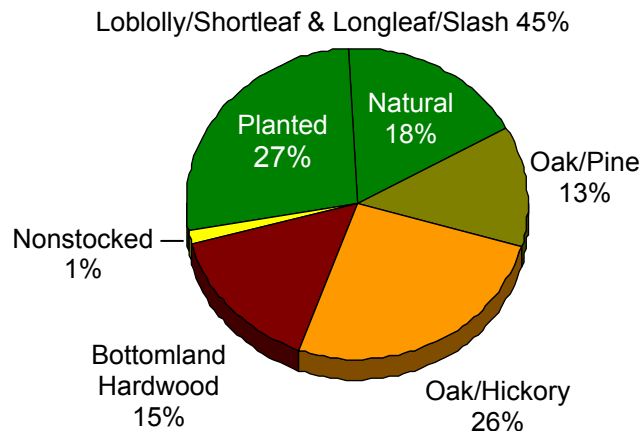




### The Resource

Georgia's forests cover 24.7 million acres, nearly two thirds of the state's land area. The majority of the state's forested land, some 22.3 million acres, is in private ownership, while approximately 752,000 acres are in national forests. Georgia's forests are prized for their scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation and providing wildlife habitat from the Appalachian Mountains in the north to the Coastal Plain in the south and east. Major forest types in the state include oak-hickory, loblolly and shortleaf pine, longleaf and slash pine, mixed oak-pine, and oak-gum-cypress. Other types account for 9% of the state's forests.

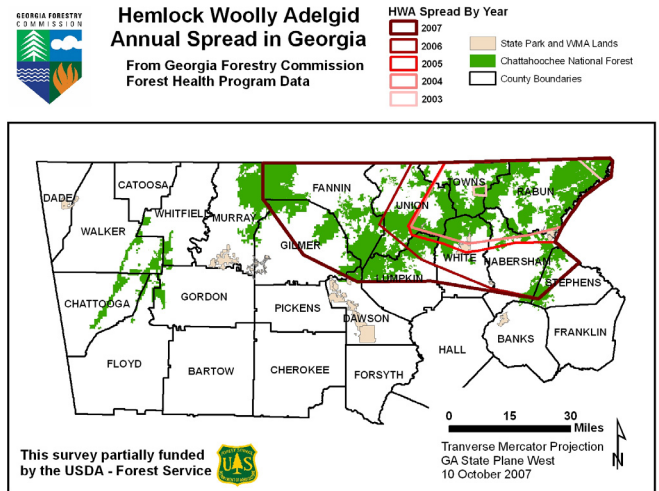


### Forest Influences and Programs

**Southern pine beetle (SPB)** is Georgia's most significant forest insect pest. In 2007, SPB activity increased significantly with over 1700 spots being detected in 32 counties; 4 counties were considered to be in epidemic status. Last year's activity was much lower at 600+ spots statewide. The three counties which sustained the worst damage have high proportions of federal land, both National Forest and National Wildlife Refuge, with important red-cockaded woodpecker habitat. Many of these stands are older and very susceptible to SPB attack. Severe drought in 2006-7 also contributed to the increase in SPB activity statewide. The Georgia Forestry Commission is offering cost-share incentives to landowners for thinning and restoration work as part of their comprehensive SPB Prevention Program. In addition, special efforts are being made to educate landowners about the benefits of preventing SPB and healthy forest management.

**Pine engraver beetles (*Ips* spp.)** displayed intense activity in the lower Piedmont and upper Coastal Plain in 2007 associated with ongoing drought. Activity is also associated with thinning, *Annosum* root disease and damage from summer wildfires. Because *Ips* infestations tend to be relatively small and scattered, they usually cannot be effectively controlled or salvaged, but their economic costs may approach those caused by SPB.

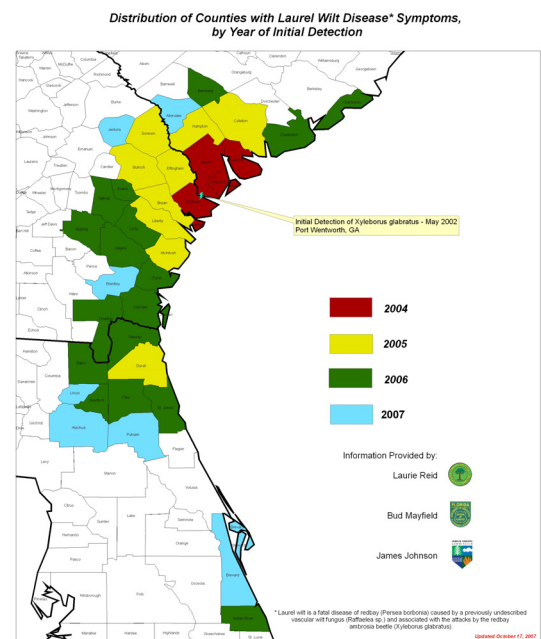
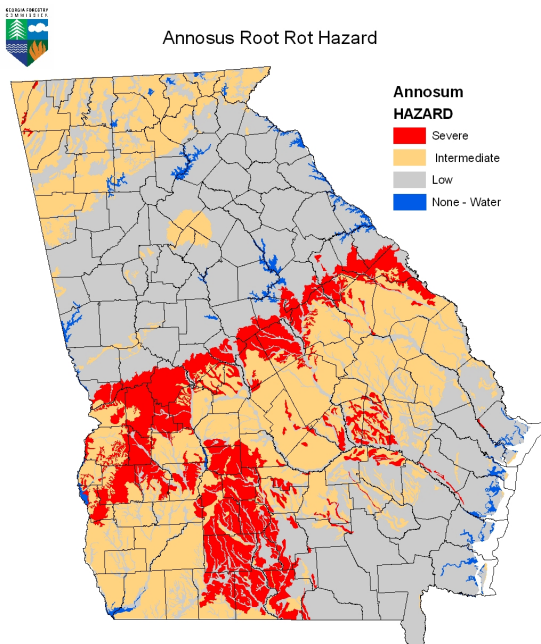
**Hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA)** was first detected in Rabun County in 2002. It has continued to spread westward across northeastern Georgia, infesting native hemlock stands across the species' range in the state in 10 counties. Current suppression activities involve a cooperative effort to rear and release predators in hope of achieving biological control of the adelgid. Three rearing facilities are now operational in Georgia—at the University of Georgia, at Young Harris College, and a new lab started at North Georgia College this year (currently producing a small number of beetles). Another facility is operating at Clemson University in South Carolina. Three predator species are being raised and released and a fourth is under study. Except on individual trees in landscape settings, chemical control of HWA is not practical, and major losses of these ecologically valuable trees are probable within a few years.



**Gypsy moth** detection trapping in 2007 involved placing over 3500 traps in a 15-county area in north Georgia and scattered traps throughout the rest of the state at high risk entry points. Two gypsy moths were caught in the Athens area. Occasional moth catches indicate the insect is being regularly transported into the state and monitoring is essential to detect any infestations soon after they become established so that eradication measures can be implemented. When moths are caught, additional traps are generally placed in that area the next year to determine if a population is becoming established.

**Annosum root disease** remains a problem on high hazard sites throughout the state. Losses from this disease were prevalent in 2005 and 2006 following a high number of Conservation Reserve Plantings being thinned. Damage continued in 2007, but reports of new damaged areas declined.

**Laurel (redbay) wilt** caused by an introduced fungus (*Raffaelea* sp.) vectored by the exotic redbay ambrosia beetle (*Xyleborus glabratus*) was first reported in 2004 and continues to spread. The insect/disease complex occurs in eighteen Georgia counties as of 2007. Eradication efforts were instituted on Jekyll Island but appear to be ineffective. The wilt has also spread to South Carolina and Florida.



**Invasive Plants** cause harm to native ecosystems by disrupting or eliminating native species. One focus invasive plant for Georgia is cogongrass. Eleven sites were known in 2004 and an aggressive campaign was launched to detect and eradicate all known sites by GFC and many other partnering groups and agencies. Over 100 sites were known by the end of 2007 and all sites were being treated by GFC, USDA APHIS or private contractors.

**Sudden oak death** surveys were initiated in Georgia in 2003 and have continued through 2007 with increased emphasis on stream baiting to detect the pathogen. The surveys focused on perimeters of horticultural nurseries that had received potentially infected stock from shippers in California and Oregon and on watersheds considered to be at elevated risk.



## **Forest Health Assistance in Georgia**

**Georgia Forestry Commission**  
1055 Whitehall Road  
Athens, GA 30605  
706-542-9608  
jjohnson@gfc.state.ga.us  
<http://www.gatrees.org/ForestManagement/ForestHealth.cfm>

**USDA Forest Service**  
Southern Region, State & Private Forestry  
Forest Health Protection  
200 W.T. Weaver Blvd.  
Asheville, NC 28804  
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/foresthealth/>