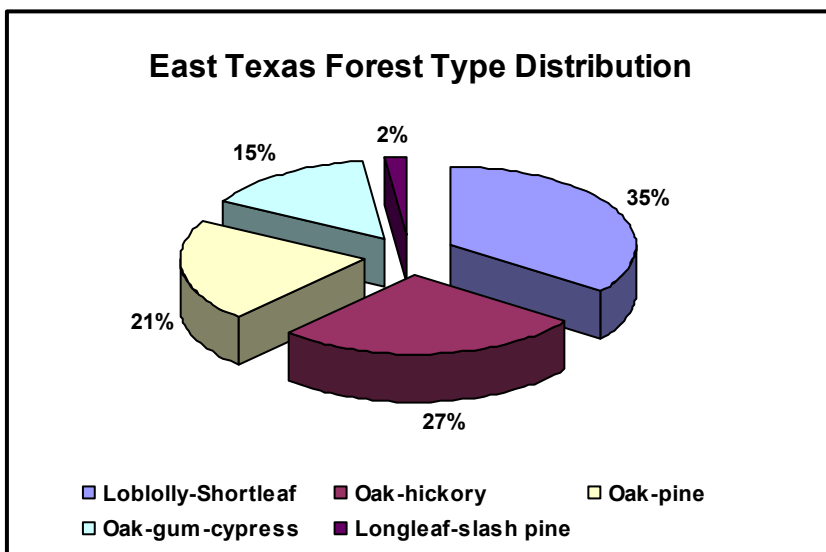


The Resource

Texas' forests cover 14.6 million acres, more than half of the eastern section of the state where the climate supports trees. The majority of the state's forested land, some 10.7 million acres, is in non-industrial private ownership, while approximately 576,000 acres are in national forests. Texas' forests are prized for their scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation and providing wildlife habitat throughout eastern Texas. Major forest types in Texas include loblolly-shortleaf pine, oak-hickory, mixed oak-pine, and oak-gum-cypress. Longleaf-slash pine accounts for only 2% of the forest.



Forest Influences and Programs

Southern pine beetle (SPB) is historically, the most important forest insect pest in Texas and the South. However, since 1994 SPB populations in the state have been very low. A trapping survey developed by the Texas Forest Service is now used in 12 southern states to forecast annual SPB population trends. No SPB infestations were reported in the state in 2007 and trapping results indicate that populations will remain virtually non-existent into 2008. Texas has developed a comprehensive SPB Prevention Program, with cooperative funding from the USDA Forest Service, which includes cost-share incentives and a landowner education program.

Oak wilt continues to cause significant mortality, primarily to live oaks, in the central Texas region affecting 70 counties. Two new counties were added in 2007—McCulloch and San Saba. Live oak, the premier tree in the region, is highly valued for beauty, shade, and wildlife benefits. The cooperative state-federal Texas Oak Wilt Suppression Project is currently in its 20th year of operation. Trenches placed between diseased and healthy trees sever interconnected root systems and halt the spread of the disease in localized disease centers. During 2007, approximately 65,820 feet of cost-shared and non-cost-shared trenches were installed around 51 oak wilt centers. In addition public education efforts were conducted at public meetings and trainings, on the oak wilt web site (www.texasoakwilt.org) and in person with affected landowners and organizations. The Texas Forest Service, The Texas Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture, and others



organized and sponsored the 2nd National Oak Wilt Symposium in Austin, Texas on June 4-7, 2007. Some 150 persons from various states and organizations attended.

Pine engraver beetles (*Ips* spp.) and black turpentine beetle were at very low levels in east Texas in 2007, mainly because rainfall was adequate through most of the year.

Fall webworm populations were present at high levels across eastern Texas in the spring of 2007. Sweetgum was the primary host and webbing and brown leaves were abundant; however, little significant harm was done to trees.

Forest tent caterpillar caused light, scattered defoliation in 2007 along the Angelina River in Angelina and Nacogdoches Counties. Sweetgum, oaks and a few other species were affected, but little significant harm was done to trees since re-foliation occurs and adequate moisture relieves stress.

The long-jawed orbweaver, a spider, made an unusual and dramatic appearance at Lake Tawakoni State Park in Hunt County (about 50 miles east of Dallas) in August of 2007. While not causing significant damage to trees, the webbing was spectacular and massive—the work of thousands of spiders in a favorable environment associated with a water body and an enormous emergence of midge insects. The web received worldwide attention and was reported on by virtually all the major print and video media outlets.



Exotic invasive species are gaining increased attention as a serious problem impacting forests. The new *Invaders of Texas* program is taking the message of exotic invasive pests to the general public by enlisting the aid of trained citizen scientists to detect and report invasive species in their neighborhoods. A dozen articles about exotic pests that are present or are potential Texas invaders prepared by Texas Forest Service forest health specialists are posted at the Texas invasives partnership web site (<http://www.texasinvasives.org>). Invasive plants are a particular concern and approximately 2.5 acres of exotic invasive cogongrass in Tyler County was treated with herbicide in October and then burned in November 2007 as a first step in an attempt to eradicate the grass from this site. This is one of the first known infestations in the state. Follow-up inspections and treatments will be conducted in the spring of 2008. The Texas Forest Service helped sponsor

and organize the 2nd Texas Invasive Plant Conference held at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, TX, November 14-16, 2007.

Forest Health Assistance in Texas

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