



News Release



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One Million Acres of Southern Forests Protected from Destructive Insect

WASHINGTON, Oct. 28, 2011 – The U.S. Forest Service announced today that the agency has protected one million acres of forest through its Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program.

The milestone was reached this fall, on private land in New Kent County, Va.

The Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program spans 13 states and crosses boundaries from privately owned land to state and national forests, aiming to prevent future outbreaks and losses. More than 13,000 individual landowners have participated in the program, together with hundreds of loggers and contractors across the South, to improve the health of southern forests.

“The millionth acre is a tribute to healthy forests throughout the South, both here in these woods and throughout the regional landscape,” USDA Deputy Undersecretary for Natural Resources and the Environment Arthur “Butch” Blazer said. “Preventing infestations by the southern pine beetle takes cooperation on a grand scale, and today we honor everyone who contributed—every acre and every effort.”

Major southern pine beetle outbreaks have occurred every eight to 12 years, historically. The most recent outbreak affected more than a million forested acres and resulted in an estimated \$1.5 billion worth of timber loss. When it ended in 2002, the Forest Service calculated that more than 8.4 million acres of southern forestland were susceptible to the next outbreak, which led officials to take preventative action. Another outbreak could lead to even greater devastating losses for the region and for individual landowners.

“It’s a native insect, but the southern pine beetle is the most destructive forest pest in the South, both in economic and ecological impacts,” said Robert Mangold, director of Forest Health Protection at the U.S. Forest Service. “The prevention program is a proactive way to sustain and strengthen forest resources.”

The Forest Service established the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program in 2003 as a comprehensive strategy to manage losses from the pest by reducing the stress to forests through good forest management. The program was developed through close cooperation with state foresters and national forest managers. Their strategy is proactive and broad—to increase the resiliency of pine forests across the South, crossing ownership boundaries and land uses.

Because the average forest landowner in the South owns 17 acres, officials said a landscape approach targeting small tracts was the right prescription. The work is accomplished through state forestry agencies and forest thinning programs.

Landowners who participate in the program are likely to continue growing trees; which translates into clean air and water, less erosion, healthy habitat for wildlife and scenic forests for all to enjoy.

The millionth-acre milestone was reached on private land in New Kent County, Va., as a result of the Logger Incentive Program developed by the Virginia Department of Forestry. This program makes treating small forests for southern pine beetle economically viable by paying loggers directly for their work on small (5- to 25-acre) pine stands.

State Forester for Virginia Carl Garrison said, “Without this program, hundreds of Virginia landowners could have suffered tremendous losses on thousands of acres of forest land.”

For state summaries and additional information:

Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/spb>

Virginia Department of Forestry Pine Bark Beetle Prevention Program:
<http://www.dof.virginia.gov/mgt/cip-fact-pbbp.htm>

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Forest Health Protection (FHP in the southern region serves Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and federal lands of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Virginia Department of Forestry protects and develops healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians. Nearly 16 million acres are forestland and more than 144,000 Virginians are employed in forestry, forest products and related industries. Virginia forests provide more than \$27.5 billion annually in benefits to the Commonwealth.