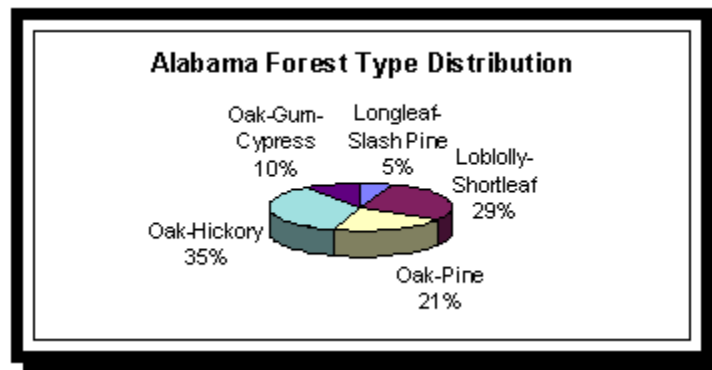


Forest Health Highlights 2002

Alabama

The Resource

Alabama's forests cover 22 million acres, more than 66% of the state's land area. The majority of the state's forested land, some 12 million acres, is in nonindustrial private ownership, while approximately 605,000 acres are in national forests. Alabama's forests are prized for their scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation and providing wildlife habitat from the Talladega Mountains in the northeast to the Gulf Coast. Major forest types in the state include oak-hickory, loblolly and shortleaf pine, mixed oak-pine, and oak-gum-cypress. Longleaf and slash pine forests, historically much more wide-ranging, now comprise 5% of the state's forests.



Forest health monitoring (FHM) activities are cooperative efforts between the USDA Forest Service and the Alabama Forestry Commission. The FHM program in Alabama includes periodic measurement of fixed plots as well as regular aerial and ground surveys to detect forest damage.

Special Issues

Key issues which State and federal programs are addressing cooperatively include:

- Urban area expansion and related impacts on forest land acreage and forest health
- 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 significant forest insect pest. In 2002, SPB activity remained severe for the fourth straight year, with 39 counties in outbreak status and 5,053 spots reported. Activity was greatest in the Appalachian foothills and Piedmont, although some counties in the Gulf Coastal Plain were also affected.

Pine engraver beetles (*Ips spp.*) displayed moderate activity in the Piedmont in 2002. 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.

Fusiform rust is one of the state's most destructive forest diseases. The fungus causes serious infections on large areas of pine forest each year.

Littleleaf disease and loblolly decline cause significant losses in shortleaf and loblolly pine stands in the Alabama Piedmont. Both diseases are caused by soil fungi and result in premature mortality, often by weakening the trees and making them more susceptible to insect attack.

Dogwood anthracnose is a disease of cool, moist areas in the higher elevation forests of northern Alabama. It is currently causing significant mortality to native dogwoods in eight counties. No new areas of infection were reported in 2002.

Weather continued to impact Alabama's forests in 2002. The fifth year of a protracted drought ended with heavy rains in October, November and December, but the wet weather arrived too late to affect the growing season, and dry weather contributed to a host of other forest health problems statewide.

Forest Health Assistance in Alabama

For further information or assistance, contact:

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