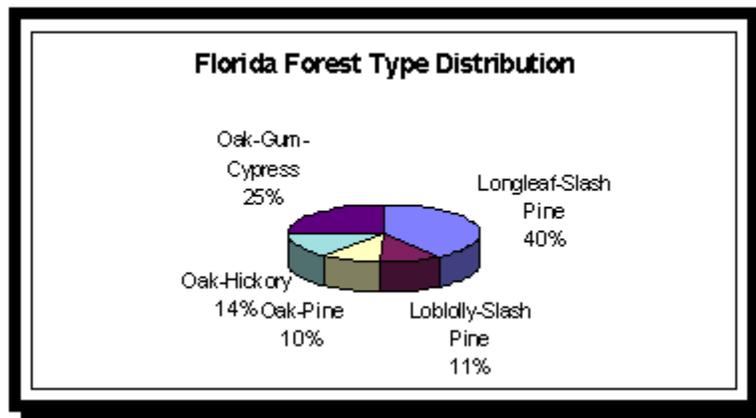


Forest Health Highlights 2003

Florida

The Resource

Florida's forests cover 15.7 million acres, about 40% of the state's land area. Eighty percent of the forested land is privately owned, with 5.5 million acres in nonindustrial private ownership. National forests in Florida occupy approximately 1.03 million acres. Florida's forests are prized for their scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation and providing wildlife habitat across the most of the state. Major forest types in Florida include oak-hickory, loblolly and shortleaf pine, longleaf and slash pine, and oak-gum-cypress.



Forest health monitoring (FHM) activities are cooperative efforts between the USDA Forest Service and the Florida Department of Agriculture's Division of Forestry. The FHM program in Florida 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:

- Sustainable management of private forest lands
- Protection and development of urban and community forest resources
- Increasing underserved citizen participation in forestry programs

Forest Influences

Southern pine beetle (SPB) losses declined to background levels in Florida in 2003. Only 2 spots were reported; no counties attained outbreak status.

Pine engraver beetles (*Ips spp.*) displayed scattered activity in areas where drought, fire or mechanical injury stressed host pines. 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.

Pink hibiscus mealybug was first reported in the state in June 2002, in Broward County. It has since spread to other counties in southern Florida, and is being controlled by the release of two species of parasitic wasps. In 2003, the release area covered 121 square miles.

The lobate lac scale, a native of India, was first detected in Florida in 1999. By 2002, it had spread over the state from Palm Beach County south, and was becoming a serious pest on numerous species of trees and shrubs. Ironically, one of the tree species most heavily impacted by the scale is Melaleuca, which is itself a non-native invasive plant.

Pitch canker is an important destructive forest disease in Florida. Major damage to slash pine plantations in proximity to poultry production facilities has been noted. No major problems were reported in 2003.

Annosum root rot is occasionally a serious problem in Florida's pine plantations, and has resulted in premature liquidation of some infected stands. It is expected to increase in importance as thinnings increase in frequency.

Declines in baldcypress, Drake elm and live oak were reported in 2003. These problems appeared to be localized.

Forest Health Assistance in Florida

For further information or assistance, contact:

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