

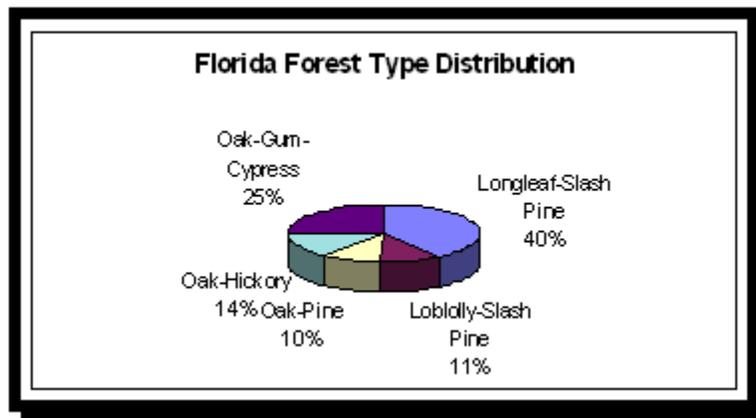
# Forest Health Highlights 2004

## Florida

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### 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 that 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) activity remained static in Florida in 2004, with only small, short-lived infestations reported. SPB prevention was promoted using a multi-media approach and a cost-share landowner assistance program.

Pine engraver beetles (*Ips* spp.) and black turpentine beetles displayed scattered activity in areas where drought, fire or mechanical injury stressed host pines. As much as 35% of the wind-damaged pines impacted by 2004 hurricanes was reportedly infested with bark beetles. 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 2004, predator releases continued over much of the southern part of the state.

The lobate lac scale, a native of India, was first detected in Florida in 1999 and spread rapidly over the state from Palm Beach County southward; it has become 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 2004.

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 thinning increases in frequency.

Two non-native climbing fern species continue to expand their range in Florida. Old World climbing fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*) now infests over 110,000 acres in 24 central and south Florida counties, while Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*) occurs in 57 counties throughout the state. The rapid expansion of these species since 1993 has been unprecedented, and further expansion is anticipated, in part due to the disturbances created by the 2004 hurricane season.

Cogon grass continues to spread in forested and non-forested sites throughout the state. This non-native invasive plant is spread primarily through movement of contaminated equipment and soil. Infestations significantly reduce forest site productivity and wildlife habitat quality.

Weather caused heavy property losses in Florida in 2004, with four major storms striking the state in rapid succession. While damage to timber resources was comparatively minor, citrus groves in the central part of the state were heavily impacted.

Sudden Oak Death surveys were conducted during 2004 by pathologists from Mississippi State University. The surveys focused on the perimeters of horticultural nurseries that had received potentially infected stock from shippers in California. The surveys did not indicate the presence of the *Phytophthora ramorum* pathogen in Florida.

## **Forest Health Assistance in Florida**

For further information or assistance, contact:

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