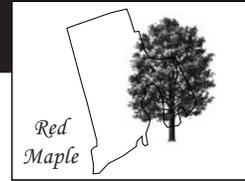


Forest Health Highlights

Rhode Island



April 1998

The Resource

Forest land in Rhode Island is owned primarily by individuals who view their land as a source of enjoyment and a resource to be protected. The existence of intense public debate related to any impact on undeveloped lands is indicative of citizen concerns for the amenities provided by these lands, whether privately or publicly held. Rhode Island's forests are valued as a source of cleaner air, protected ground and surface water, wildlife habitat, wood fiber, and recreational opportunities.

Special Issues

The forests of Rhode Island are currently experiencing a time of healthy growth. Recovery from drought conditions of the early 1990's is very evident. To assess forest condition, annual statewide aerial survey are conducted within the state. These surveys help to determine forest stressors and damage. Follow-up ground evaluations are undertaken to verify damage and ascertain cause. In 1997, the only major damage observed was due to the forest tent caterpillar. Defoliation from this pest was mapped in the central part of the state.

The annual statewide sample for **gypsy moth** egg masses is conducted every year in January and February. The results of the survey are plotted on a geographic information system (GIS) to determine gypsy moth population distribution. For the past few years the population of the gypsy moth has been low, mostly due to the presence of the fungus, *Entomophaga maimaiga*, which attacks the caterpillar stage. Since its introduction into the United States in the early 1900's, this fungus has spread throughout the Northeast and now occurs in the natural environment. There is no expected need for suppression against the gypsy moth in Rhode Island in 1998.

Various other pests are monitored within the state each year. These pests include the **hemlock woolly adelgid**, still impacting native hemlock in the state; **pine sawflies**, mostly found in pine plantations; and **Diplodia**, a fungus-caused tip blight on pines. Recently, private landowner requests for information concerning pest identification and control recommendations were mostly related to minor forest pests.

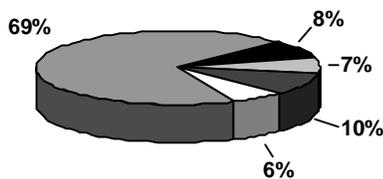
Efforts to enhance Rhode Island's **urban forests** are producing tangible results. The RI Tree Council, a coalition of residents and local, state, and federal partners, has been conducting workshops for citizens, public works groups, tree wardens, and arborists. Also, communities are assisted with grants for planting, tree inventories, and getting the residents involved with tree care of neighborhood trees. Planting of sustainable trees and using proper tree care is resulting in a healthier and expanded urban forest in the state.

•60% of the state is forested
(371,800 acres)

Out of the forested area:

- 91.8% timberland
- 8.2% non commercial or reserved forestland

Major Forest Types:



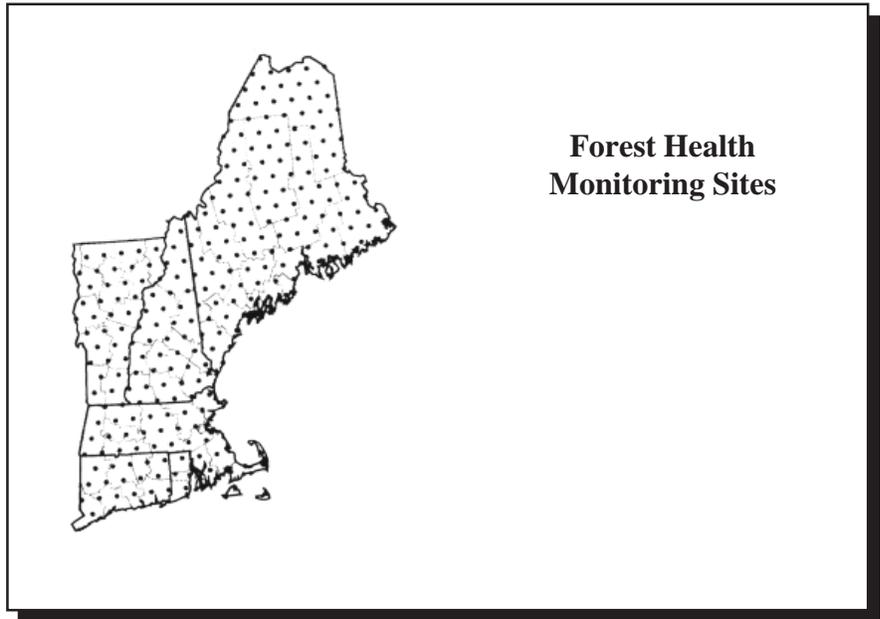
- oak/pine (8%)
- northern hardwoods (7%)
- other (10%)
- elm/ash/red maple (6%)
- oak/hickory (69%)

Regional Surveys

Interest in regional forest condition prompted the implementation of the National Forest Health Monitoring Program and the North American Maple Project.

FOREST HEALTH MONITORING PROGRAM

The objective is to assess trend in tree condition and forest stressors. All of the New England States have been involved since the program was initiated in 1990. Results indicate that there has been minimal change in crown condition in the last 8 years. In 1997, about 98 percent of trees greater than 5 inches diameter had normal crown fullness. About 97 percent of the trees had little or no crown dieback, and 78 percent showed no measurable signs of damage. The most common damage was decay indicators, which were more evident on hardwoods than softwoods. Additional surveys indicate there are concerns for individual species such as ash, butternut and hemlock due to various damage agents.



NORTH AMERICAN MAPLE PROJECT

This cooperative project with Canada was initiated in 1988 to look at change in sugar maple tree condition. There are several states in the Northeast involved including New York, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, and Massachusetts. Overall, sugar maple located within the sample sites are in good condition. Periodically, insect defoliation has affected crown condition in some areas. There was little difference found between sugarbush and non sugarbush stands.

For More Information



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