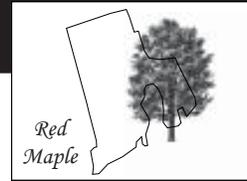


2001 Forest Health Highlights

Rhode Island



The Resource

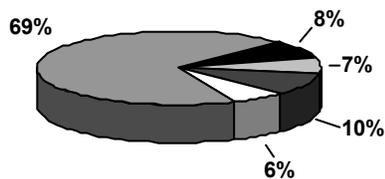
Forest land in Rhode Island is owned primarily by individuals who view their land as a source of enjoyment and a resource to be protected. The existence of intense public debate related to any impact on undeveloped lands is indicative of citizen concerns for the amenities provided by these lands, whether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

•55% of the State is forested
(371,800 acres)

Out of the forested area:

- 91.8% timberland
- 8.2% noncommercial or reserved forest land

Major Forest Types:



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

Special Issues

The forests of Rhode Island are monitored annually to assess forest condition. Statewide, aerial surveys are conducted over 350,000 acres of forest land. These surveys help to determine forest stressors and damage. Follow-up ground evaluations are undertaken to verify damage and ascertain cause. To incorporate forest health in urban and suburban tree management, the Rhode Island Division of Forest Environment provides technical information and workshops to arborists, who are regulated by the State arborist licensing statute.

The most widespread damage to Rhode Island forests in 2001 was the **killing frost** that affected 54,000 acres in early May. This frost was preceded by 4 days of temperatures in excess of 90 degrees. The hot weather drew out tender foliage of deciduous oaks, hickories, ash, and beech. The frost and subsequent temperatures in the low 20's killed all foliage and shoots at elevations below 700 feet. Damage was exacerbated by drought conditions, resulting in a delay of 5 weeks before the trees re-foliated. Urban trees and forest species such as maples and birches leaf out earlier and had time to harden off, and therefore were not affected by the frost.

In 2001, **gypsy moth** defoliation nearly doubled from the previous year. Approximately 8,000 acres were 100 percent defoliated in northern Rhode Island. Survey results from the end of June showed significant caterpillar mortality from fungal and viral infection in the heart of the infested area. At the outer edges of the infestation, caterpillar mortality levels were less defined.

Over 3,000 acres in the central part of the State were infested by the **orange-striped oakworm**. This pest lingered from the last week of August through much of September, depriving many homeowners of the enjoyment of their backyards and closing swimming pools early. This is the second year in a row for high levels of oakworm in this area.

Special Issues cont.

Current forestry issues in the State are related to introduced forest insect pests. Hemlock continues to decline due to infestation by the **hemlock woolly adelgid**. Other introduced insect pests, the **red pine scale** and **red pine adelgid**, have severely impacted red pine stands in the State.

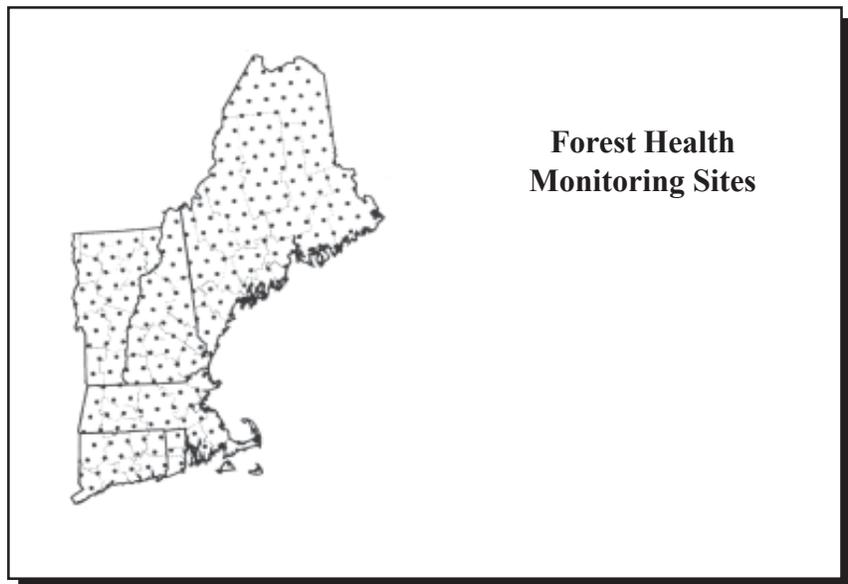
Outreach is a strong component of the Rhode Island Division of Forest Environment's Forest Health Program. Tree care training sessions for arborists and volunteer tree stewards are held several times each year. Diagnostic assistance to forest landowners, Christmas tree growers, and homeowners is ongoing.

Regional Surveys

National Forest Health Monitoring Program

Interest in regional forest condition prompted the implementation of the National Forest Health Monitoring Program.

The program's objective is to assess trends 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 12 years. In 2000, 95 percent of trees greater than 5 inches diameter had normal crown fullness, about 85 percent had little or no crown dieback, and 70 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.

For More Information



Dept. of Environmental Management
Div. of Forest Environment
1037 Hartford Pike
North Scituate, RI 02857
(401) 647-3367

Forest Health Protection
USDA Forest Service
P.O. Box 640
Durham, NH 03824
(603) 868-7709

