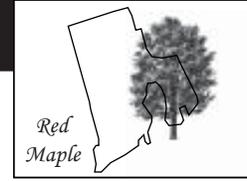


2002 Forest Health Highlights

Rhode Island



January 2003

The Resource

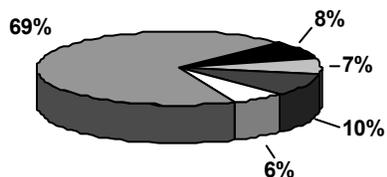
Forest land in Rhode Island is owned primarily by individuals who view their land as a source of enjoyment and a resource to be protected. The existence of intense public debate related to any impact on undeveloped lands is indicative of citizen concerns for the amenities provided by these lands, whether 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.

Rhode Island experienced **drought** conditions again during the 2002 growing season. While the spring was moist, July and August were very dry. This was exacerbated by extended heat waves. Leaf drop on ash, butternut, and maple were reported mostly in landscape settings. Heat islands and corridors in urban areas were easily defined by brown, dry foliage in mid-August.

Exotic pests are of concern in the State. One of the more significant is the **hemlock woolly adelgid**, which occurs in all of the State's 39 cities and towns. Public awareness is high and many property owners regularly treat their landscape trees with horticultural oil or insecticidal soap. Forest-grown hemlocks continue to decline statewide. Salvage harvests and harvests to mitigate hazards on State-owned properties are ongoing.

Another introduced pest, **red pine scale**, occurs statewide. Salvage harvests are ongoing. Mortality poses concerns for wildland fire fuel build-up, especially in areas with limited access or where the trees have little economic value. Mature stands of American beech in Washington and Kent Counties are infected with **beech bark disease**, which spread from the Canadian Maritimes in the 1930's. Butternut canker occurs statewide.

There was no noticeable **gypsy moth** defoliation in 2002. However, native pests caused considerable damage. For the third year in a row, **orange-striped oakworm** caused defoliation. About 4,000 acres were completely defoliated in central and eastern Rhode Island. The population shows signs of collapse in Kent County but may be strengthening in Newport County, specifically in the town of Tiverton.

Special Issues cont.

Coastal areas of Rhode Island had serious damage and mortality from the **spruce aphid** in landscape and nursery settings on white spruce. Aquidneck Island in Newport County was hardest hit. Growing populations of **beech blight aphid** with the resulting heavy mats of sooty mold are reported in Kent and Washington Counties. American beech, as a component of Rhode Island forest stands, is increasing as the forests mature. Beech has become a more common understory and intermediate species over the last 20 years with a resulting concern for beech health.

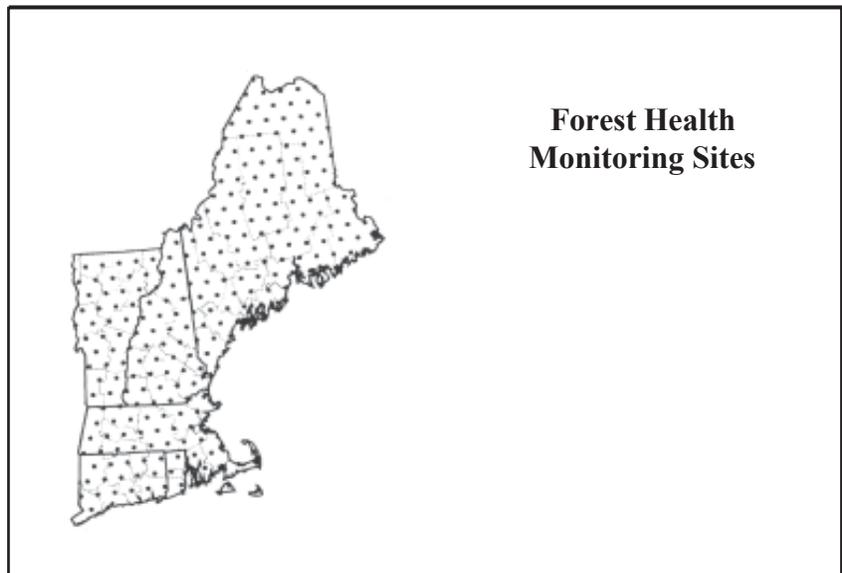
Outreach is a strong component of the Rhode Island Division of Forest Environment's Forest Health Program. Tree care training sessions for arborists and volunteer tree stewards are held several times each year. Diagnostic assistance to forest landowners, Christmas tree growers, and homeowners is available.

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 13 years, with about 95 percent of trees greater than 5 inches diameter having normal crown fullness, about 85 percent with little or no crown dieback, and over 70 percent showing 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



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