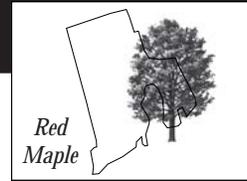


2003 Forest Health Highlights

Rhode Island



January 2004

The Resource

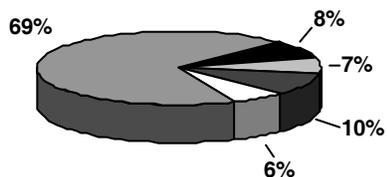
Forest land in Rhode Island is owned primarily by individuals who view their land as a source of enjoyment and a resource to be protected. The existence of intense public debate related to any impact on undeveloped lands is indicative of citizen concerns for the amenities provided by these lands, whether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

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.

A cool, wet spring in 2003 enhanced **anthracnose** on many hardwoods, most notably on white oaks. Many mature white oaks suffered a complete leaf drop at the end of June. Affected white oaks did refoliate, but slowly. Anthracnose damage was scattered statewide on maples, oaks, horsechestnut, and sycamore.

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 and continues to kill trees. Many urban and suburban trees are being successfully treated with insecticide and/or horticultural oil. Infested forest stands are in decline.

Decline of white ash, particularly in urban fringe areas, is scattered throughout the State. The crowns of many mature urban trees have lost foliage in excess of 50 percent. A "liontailing" effect is evident, with all remaining foliage clustered at the outermost branches.

There was no noticeable **gypsy moth** defoliation in 2003 and only three areas of **orange-striped oakworm** defoliation in central Rhode Island, where the populations appear to have crashed in the later instars. A total of 1,500 acres were 85 percent defoliated—all in Kent County.

Salt damage along roads was evident on hardwoods and conifers in the spring. Mortality was primarily confined to small trees (1.5 inch at the root collar and smaller).

Special Issues cont.

Coastal areas of Rhode Island had serious damage and mortality from the **spruce aphid** on white spruce in landscape and nursery settings. 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.

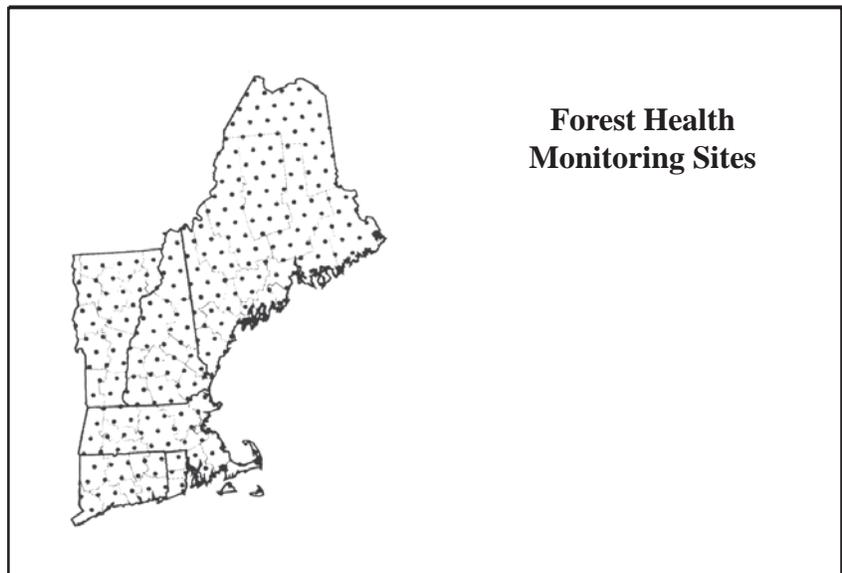
Outreach is a strong component of the Rhode Island Division of Forest Environment's Forest Health Program. Tree care training sessions for arborists and volunteer tree stewards are held several times each year. Diagnostic assistance to forest landowners, Christmas tree growers, and homeowners is available.

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.



Forest Health Monitoring Sites

Results indicate that there has been minimal change in crown condition in the last 14 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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