



# South Carolina Forestry Commission



## **FOREST HEALTH**

### **2016 SOUTH CAROLINA HIGHLIGHTS**

#### **The Resource**

South Carolina's forest cover 13 million acres, which is 63% of the state's land area. The majority of the state's forested land is in nonindustrial private ownership, covering about 11.4 million acres, with approximately 629,000 acres in national forests.

Forestry is the most important manufacturing industry in South Carolina, providing 90,320 jobs and a total economic impact of \$18.6 billion annually. \$1.5 billion in forest products are exported from South Carolina and forest products are the number one export commodity from the port of Charleston. Trees are South Carolina's number one harvested crop, totaling \$759 million. South

Carolina's forests are known for their scenic beauty, attracting tourism, outdoor recreation, and providing wildlife habitat from the Appalachian Mountains in the upstate to the Atlantic Coastal Plain.

Major forest types in South Carolina include oak-hickory, loblolly and shortleaf pine, mixed oak-pine, and oak-gum-cypress. Longleaf and slash pine forests, once more widespread, now make up four percent of South Carolina's forests, with other minor forest types accounting for an additional six percent.

## **Forest Issues and Influences**

### **Southern pine beetle (SPB)/Pine engraver beetles (*Ips* spp.)**

The most damaging pest of southern pine forests is the southern pine beetle (SPB). Surveys for SPB conducted in the spring of 2016 detected low populations. A total of 368 SPB were trapped from 32 counties.

### **Redbay mortality (laurel wilt disease)**

Caused by the fungus *Raffaelea lauricola* and vectored by the redbay ambrosia beetle (*Xyleborus glabratus*) laurel wilt has killed many redbay trees along South Carolina's coast and continues to spread.

### **Cogongrass**

As of 2016 a total of 13 infestations of cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*) have been identified. Of these, only four remain active. All known sites are monitored to combat cogongrass where it is still active or to ensure that managed sites remain inactive.

### **Hurricane Matthew**

This October South Carolina was hit by Hurricane Matthew. The coast saw damage from tidal surge and some wind damage, but cursory aerial surveys revealed light damage limited to small pockets (less than 5 acres) of overly-thinned or recently thinned pines. There was also spotty damage to large hardwoods that fell over due to saturated soils

### **Drought and Hot Temperatures**

Bracketed by floods in October of 2015 and October 2016, the summer of 2016 was extremely dry and hot. A notable number of individual red oaks (southern red and water oaks) and individual pines died from Hampton County north to McCormick and Lexington Counties, largely as a result of drought and heat stress. The pines that died often showed signs of being stressed for many (10 or more) years and were infested with *Ips* beetles and southern pine sawyers. The upstate also experienced a prolonged drought this summer and the effects were most notable on granite outcrops in Pickens and Greenville Counties. On these outcrops the thin soil couldn't hold enough moisture to keep a broad range of hardwood species alive, including oaks, hickories and several others. The drought also turned into a disaster when the dry forests

easily caught fire in November, burning more than 10,500 acres. Luckily no lives were lost or property damaged.

## **Forest Health Assistance in South Carolina**

For more information or assistance, please contact:

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