

## **Forest Health Highlights in Texas 2015**

- The threat of invasive insect pests dominates the forest health scene in Texas in 2015. Emerald ash borer was detected in northern Louisiana in 2014, just 40 miles from the Texas border. In early 2015, laurel wilt and its vector the redbay ambrosia beetle were first reported in Hardin and Jasper counties of southeast Texas. One redbay ambrosia beetle also was captured in a trap on the Siecke State Forest in nearby Newton County, but laurel wilt has yet to be found at this site.
- With funding from the USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), TFS and collaborators installed and monitored over 800 detection traps for emerald ash borer in 2015. To successfully conduct this survey, volunteer groups such as Master Naturalists were solicited and trained in counties not covered by TFS staff. Large, purple tri-panel traps were installed on ash trees in 77 counties in March or early April and monitored in June and the end of August. Fortunately, no EAB have been found to date, despite the discovery of EAB infestations in Arkansas (2014) and Louisiana (2015).
- As predicted using spring-deployed pheromone traps, no southern pine beetle (SPB) infestations were detected in Texas in 2015, making this the 19<sup>th</sup> year with no SPB activity. Predictions for 2016 indicate another year with no SPB activity.
- Oak wilt, caused by the fungal pathogen *Ceratocystis fagacearum*, continues to be the major tree disease problem in live oak and red oak woodlands of Central Texas in both urban and rural areas. The Cooperative Oak Wilt Suppression Project, funded by the USFS/Forest Health Protection, and delivered by TFS foresters is now in its 28<sup>th</sup> year. This cost-share program continues to promote public awareness, prevention and control options for affected landowners throughout Central Texas.
- The Texas A&M Forest Service continues to administer the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program in East Texas, now in its 14<sup>th</sup> year. To date, 126,041 acres of beetle-prone pine stands have been thinned and more than \$5.9 million in federal cost shares have been provided to more than 2,000 participating landowners in 36 counties. No SPB infestations have been reported since the prevention program began.
- Supplemented by federal funding from the US Forest Service, Forest Health Protection, Region 8, the Texas A&M Forest Service is working with the City of Port Aransas to manage expanding infestations of Brazilian peppertree (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) on Mustang Island, using public awareness campaigns and TFS/ City/volunteer treatment crews.