

June 10, 2005

SUCCESS STORY

Subject: Southern Pine Beetle Initiative (SPBI) - TN

Everyone in the forestry community is painfully aware of the severe southern pine beetle outbreak Tennessee has experienced over the last few years. The outbreak began in 1998 in east Tennessee. Beetles infested most of east Tennessee and portions of middle and southwest Tennessee. The beetle has impacted an estimated 385,000 acres, causing a minimum of \$380 million dollars in losses on state and private land.

In August of 2001, the USDA Forest Service allocated funding to the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Division of Forestry (TDF) to create the Southern Pine Beetle Initiative (SPBI). The purpose of this initiative was to encourage non-industrial private forest landowners to implement practices to “beetle proof” future and current pine stands. Funds under SPBI will be available through September 30, 2006.

With the support of U.S. Rep. Zach Wamp of Chattanooga, more than \$3 million in federal cost-share funds is available to qualified landowners for implementing SPB resistant stand treatments. Stand treatments include tree planting at wider spacing, release of pine seedlings from competition, and thinning crowded pine stands. Forest landowners can qualify for up to 50% percent of stand treatment costs.

The success story lies in the numbers and in the fields and forests of Tennessee. Nearly 650 separate projects have been completed for about as many landowners. Many projects involved multiple measures and practices. Tennessee also involved private consultants which helped their businesses but more importantly helped promptly serve the acres and owners in need. Approximately 30,000 acres have been treated so far in TN. Nearly 2.5 million in cost-share assistance has been paid out. Thousands of additional acres and the balance of the 3 million estimated dollars for cost-shared practices are in the works.

Public education and technical assistance was well distributed and well received for countless other owners and citizens who did not apply for cost-share practices. TDF worked with Univ. of TN to develop an internet hotline. The Agriculture website also has detailed information for landowners and the public. A management guide was developed and recently published for southern pine management. Minority and underserved landowners were also targeted through workshops. Outreach through TDF field staff reached from TDF Area offices to the local coffee shops and beyond.

The goal of mitigating current and future losses and re-establishing healthy pine resources across Tennessee’s landscape has been a significant success.