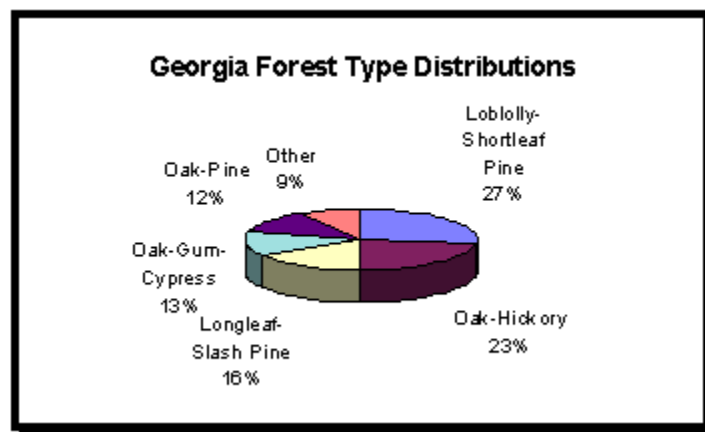


Forest Health Highlights 2002

Georgia

The Resource

Georgia's forests cover 24.4 million acres, nearly two thirds of the state's land area. The majority of the state's forested land, some 17.1 million acres, is in nonindustrial private ownership, while approximately 752,000 acres are in national forests. Forestry is the most important industry in Georgia, providing 177,000 jobs and producing \$19.5 billion in annual revenue. Georgia's forests are also prized for their scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation and providing wildlife habitat from the Appalachian Mountains in the north to the Coastal Plain in the south and east. Major forest types in the state include oak-hickory, loblolly and shortleaf pine, longleaf and slash pine, mixed oak-pine, and oak-gum-cypress. Other types account for 9% of the state's forests.



Forest health monitoring (FHM) activities are cooperative efforts between the USDA Forest Service and the Georgia Forestry Commission. The FHM program in Georgia includes periodic measurement of fixed plots as well as regular aerial and ground surveys to detect forest damage.

Special Issues

Key issues which State and federal programs are addressing cooperatively include:

- Urban area expansion and related impacts on forest land acreage and forest health
- Water quality protection through greater use of best management practices
- Sustaining forest resources through wise private landowner stewardship

Forest Influences

Southern pine beetle (SPB) is Georgia's most significant forest insect pest. In 2002, SPB activity was severe across the northern half of state, with 44 counties in outbreak status and an estimated 6.4 million trees killed. Poor market conditions hampered salvage efforts, and as a result, approximately 88% of the trees were lost.

Pine engraver beetles (*Ips* spp.) displayed heavy activity in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain in 2002. Because *Ips* infestations tend to be relatively small and scattered, they usually cannot be effectively controlled or salvaged, but their economic costs may approach those caused by SPB.

Hemlock wooly adelgid (HWA) was first detected in Rabun County in 2002. It has the potential to spread across north Georgia, devastating native hemlock stands. Current suppression activities involve a cooperative effort to rear and release predators in hope of achieving biological control of the adelgid, but the prognosis for hemlocks is not good. Except on individual trees in landscape settings, chemical control of HWA is not practical, and major losses of these ecologically valuable trees are probable within a few years.

Gypsy moth suppression activity was limited to trapping in 2002. Three male moths were caught, all in the Atlanta area.

Fusiform rust is one of the state's most destructive forest diseases. The fungus causes serious infections on extensive areas of pine forest.

Annosum root rot remains a problem on high hazard sites throughout the state. Losses from this disease are especially serious in older CRP plantations that have been thinned.

Dogwood anthracnose is a disease of cool, moist areas in the higher elevation forests of northern Georgia. It is currently causing significant mortality to native dogwoods in 38 counties. No new areas of infection were reported in 2002.

Weather continued to impact Georgia's forests in 2002. The fifth year of a protracted drought ended with heavy rains in October, November and December, but the wet weather arrived too late to affect the growing season, and dry weather contributed to a host of other forest health problems statewide. Impacts to nurseries were severe, with heavy losses to containerized seedlings.

Forest Health Assistance in Georgia

For further information or assistance, contact:

Georgia Forestry Commission

PO Box 819
Macon, GA 31202-0819
(912) 751-3497

USDA Forest Service

Forest Health Protection
200 WT Weaver Blvd.
Asheville, NC 28804
(828) 257-4320