

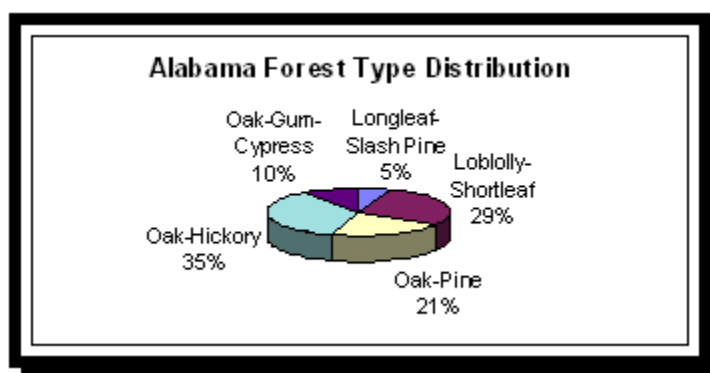
# Forest Health Highlights - 2004

## Alabama

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### The Resource

Alabama's forests cover 22 million acres, more than 66% of the state's land area. The majority of the state's forested land, some 12 million acres, is in nonindustrial private ownership, while approximately 605,000 acres are in national forests. Alabama's forests are prized for their scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation and providing wildlife habitat from the Talladega Mountains in the northeast to the Gulf Coast. Major forest types in the state include oak-hickory, loblolly and shortleaf pine, mixed oak-pine, and oak-gum-cypress. Longleaf and slash pine forests, historically much more wide-ranging, now comprise 5% of the state's forests.



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

### Special Issues

Key issues that 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 Alabama's most significant forest insect pest. In 2004, SPB activity increased in the southwestern portion of the state, with 1,471 spots reported statewide and 15 counties considered to have epidemic populations.

Pine engraver beetles (*Ips* spp.) displayed light activity in the Piedmont in 2004. Some increase in activity was seen in the southwest coastal plain in response to damage from hurricane Ivan. 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.

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

Littleleaf disease and loblolly decline cause significant losses in shortleaf and loblolly pine stands in the Alabama Piedmont. Both diseases are caused by soil fungi and result in premature mortality, often by weakening the trees and making them more susceptible to insect attack.

Annosum root disease infections and mortality increased, especially in CRP plantations in the southern part of the state. This became evident after hurricane winds blew over many pines with damaged root systems.

Dogwood anthracnose is a disease of cool, moist areas in the higher elevation forests of northern Alabama. It is currently causing significant mortality to native dogwoods in eight counties. No new areas of infection were reported in 2004.

Weather often impacts Alabama's forests. In 2004, hurricanes produced 188,584 acres of severe damage and 196,376 acres of moderate damage to forests over a twelve-county area.

Sudden Oak Death surveys were initiated in Alabama in 2004 and were conducted by pathologists from Mississippi State University. The surveys were focused on the perimeters of horticultural nurseries that received potentially infected stock from shippers in California. None of the samples collected in Alabama indicated the presence of the *Phytophthora ramorum* pathogen.

## **Forest Health Assistance in Alabama**

For further information or assistance, contact:

### **Alabama Forestry Commission**

513 Madison Avenue  
Montgomery, AL 36130  
(334) 240-9390

### **USDA Forest Service**

Forest Health Protection  
2500 Shreveport Highway  
Pineville, LA 71360  
(318) 473-7286