

Alabama

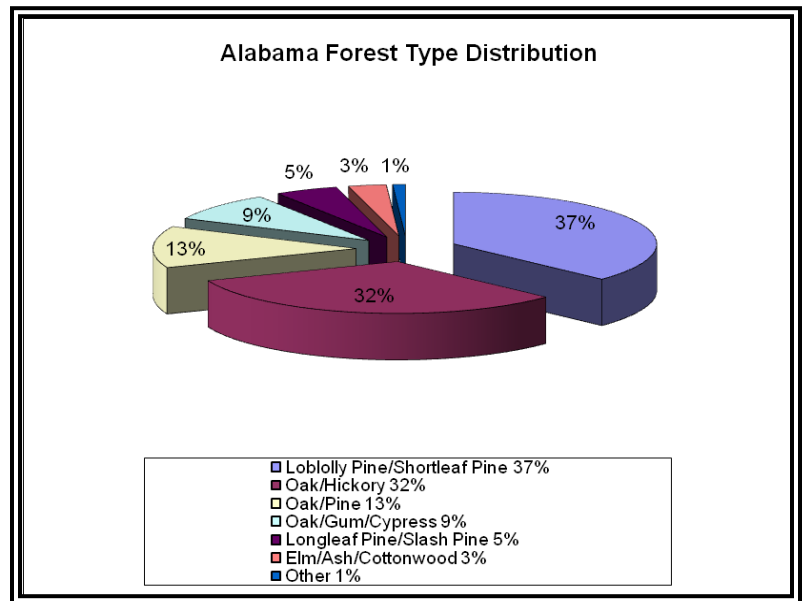


Forest Health Highlights

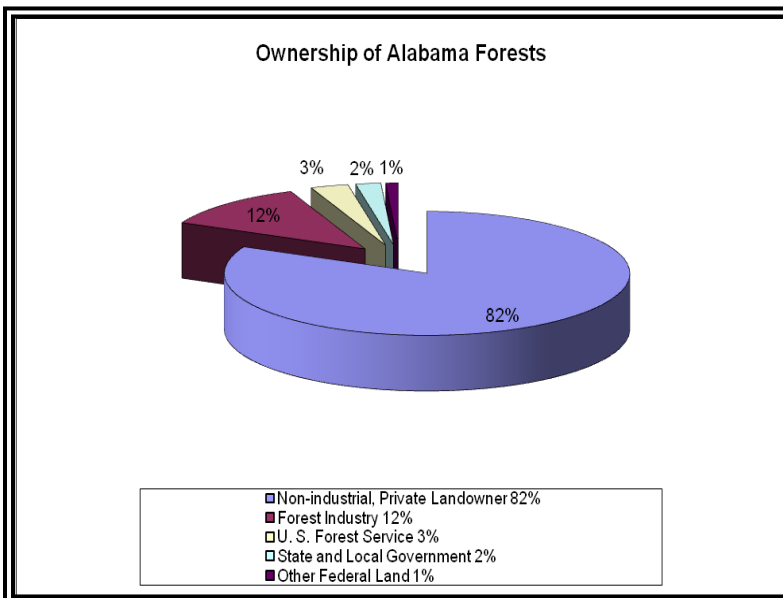
2011

The Resource

The landscape of Alabama continues to captivate residents and visitors alike with its diverse beauty and unique history. As a state with a notable industrial and agricultural background – cotton, steel, poultry, timber, and most recently automobile, economic opportunities incite the interest of current and potential residents. The climate also influences people to consider Alabama home. Its warm sandy beaches of the coastal plain are perfect for a relaxing venue while the cool mountain plateaus provide pristine scenic beauty of the most breathtaking forestlands in the nation. To visualize the various forest ecosystems of Alabama that creates this serene grace, a graph below illustrates the major forest types in the state.



Since the last decade, the forests of Alabama remain virtually the same. With continuous public awareness and land management, many forest ecosystems are sustainable. Timber production, wildlife habitat, and recreational activities are still thriving, providing the general public and private citizens the opportunity to enjoy Alabama’s most precious natural resources.



Considered one of the most forested states in the nation, Alabama contains several state parks and national forests for outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy. Even with a high number of public estates, the majority of forestland, however, is owned by non-industrial private landowners. Forest industry, a major component of the state’s economy, is continuing to slowly divest its property, decreasing its ownership again by 1 percent. With a distinctive group of owners, Alabama has a total of 22,738,088 acres of forestland, a marginal increase from the previous year of 22,716,704. Based on FIA data, this number suggests that the state is slightly growing more timber than removing it.

Forest Influences and Programs

Southern pine beetle, *Dendroctonus frontalis* (SPB):

Overall, the SPB population in AL remained quite low for the fourth consecutive year. There was, however, a sudden increase in beetle activity starting in October of 2010. This rapid “spike” caused some concerns about a possible epidemic for 2011. After ground checking the majority of these detected infestations, most of them were caused by the pine engraver beetle. During the first few months of 2011, there was very little indication of a potential beetle problem. The SPB pheromone survey supported this result; very few beetles were captured in traps this past spring. The April tornadoes, however, ravaged the state, destroying acres of forestland. Concerned about beetle infestations occurring in these damaged areas, detection flights were conducted starting in June. After completing the detection flights at the end of the fiscal year, there were still very few reported SPB spots in the state. No SPB spots were reported on national forest or other federal lands.



Pine engraver beetle, *Ips* spp.: Considered less aggressive than other bark beetles, the pine engraver beetle has caused more pine mortality than the SPB during the last few years. Greatly influenced by adverse environmental conditions, the pine engraver beetle had a significant number of infestations in areas suffering from the effects of the drought and areas severely damaged by the April tornadoes. Several infestations were large enough to be detected by aerial surveys. In October and November of 2010, several hundred spots were reported by this method. By the early part of 2011, the number of infestations declined. This situation did not last very long, with a noticeable increase in beetle activity by the summer of 2011. Pine engraver beetle infestations were occurring statewide, especially in areas ravaged by the April tornadoes.

Black Turpentine Beetle, *Dendroctonus terebrans*: Not initially recognized as a problem, most black turpentine beetle attacks were overlooked by the more commonly identified pine engraver beetle and southern pine beetle infestations. By mid-summer, however, there were reports of several pines infested with black turpentine beetles. Most were in association with a pine engraver beetle attack.

Linden loopers, *Erannis tiliaria*: For the third consecutive year, the linden looper made a drastic appearance in the northern half of Alabama. Not as severe as last year, but Alabama was once again “Knocked for a Loop”. This spring, the defoliation of hardwoods was more scattered throughout north and central Alabama. Besides oaks, the host trees varied with the linden looper also attacking maple and hickory. Most of the affected trees were located on ridge tops. By June, 2011, however, the damaged trees recovered, growing new foliage and regaining their vigor.



Periodical Cicada, *Magicicada tredecim*: The periodical cicada also made a noticeable appearance this spring. With several broods statewide emerging from pupation, cicadas were creating an exhilarating noise among urban trees and rural forests. There were numerous questions asked by landowners about cicadas and their harm to host species. Besides limited flagging of stems on a few trees, no significant damage was caused by the cicadas.



Laurel Wilt Disease, *Raffaelea lauricola* – Redbay Ambrosia Beetle, *Xyleborus glabratus*: The inevitable occurred in July of 2011. Symptomatic redbay trees were detected in Mobile County near Grand Bay, AL. Also in July, a strange phenomenon transpired; symptomatic sassafras trees were identified in an isolated area of Marengo County. By September, these symptomatic trees in both counties were confirmed of having laurel wilt disease. A news announcement was released later that month informing the public about this invasive pest existing in the state. Redbay beetle traps were deployed from August to October in Washington and Clarke Counties to determine the actual spread of this disease. From the survey, no redbay ambrosia beetles were captured in the traps and no wilting of laurel species was noticed in these two counties.





Emerald Ash Borer, *Agrilus planipennis*: Since becoming established in Tennessee last year, the emerald ash borer has caused mortality to several ash trees near Knoxville. Spreading rapidly into the southeast, this exotic insect has killed more than a million ash trees in the U.S. since its introduction into Detroit, MI in 2002. Understanding the potential effect the emerald ash borer will have on host trees in the region, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Forestry Division arranged a field tour for forest health specialists to observe and study this pest. The field session gave forest health specialists the opportunity to physically view and further understand this non-native invasive insect.

Thousand Cankers Disease, *Geosmithia morbida* & *Fusarium solani* - Black Walnut Twig Beetle, *Pityophthorus juglandis*:

From its initial detection in Tennessee last year, thousand cankers disease has unexpectedly spread hastily into two other eastern states. In 2011, there were news releases announcing the confirmation of thousand cankers disease in Virginia and Pennsylvania. Because of the potential devastation to eastern black walnut trees in the region, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Forestry Division arranged a field tour for forest health specialists to observe and study this pest. In Tennessee alone, the walnut twig beetle with its associated fungus has caused mortality to several walnut trees in the Knoxville area.



Cogongrass, *Imperata cylindrica*: To continue the efforts of assessing and controlling cogongrass, FL along with four other southeastern states submitted a proposal for a new cogongrass redesign grant. This grant will work in conjunction with existing ARRA grants and other projects in preventing the further spread of this noxious weed and to eradicate it from selected areas. The Alabama Forestry Commission has drafted a sub-grant to the County Road Departments for assessing and treating cogongrass infestations along rights-of-way in AL.

Weather: A very inconsistent weather pattern occurred in 2011. Even though the state did not completely recover from the summer drought of 2010, most of AL did receive ample amount of precipitation during the winter and spring seasons. By April, the climate was rather cool and precipitation adequate. On April 15, 2011, however, a series of tornadoes moved across the state causing devastation and destruction. Somewhat unbelievable, this catastrophic event occurred once again in the same month. On April 27, 2011 a series of tornadoes ravaged the state, this time obliterating property and taking lives. Soon after this horrific event, the climate in AL changed; the weather became hot and dry. Drought conditions started in the southern part of the state and eventually expanded north. By June, the effects of the drought were quite vivid. Wildfires were numerous to say the least and several reports of beetle infestations were occurring throughout the state. There was some relief in August and September with occasional passing showers, but not enough to recover from the severe drought conditions of the previous months.



For more information on Alabama’s forest health program, go to the Alabama Forestry Commission’s website:
<http://www.forestry.alabama.gov>

Forest Health Assistance in Alabama

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