

Arkansas

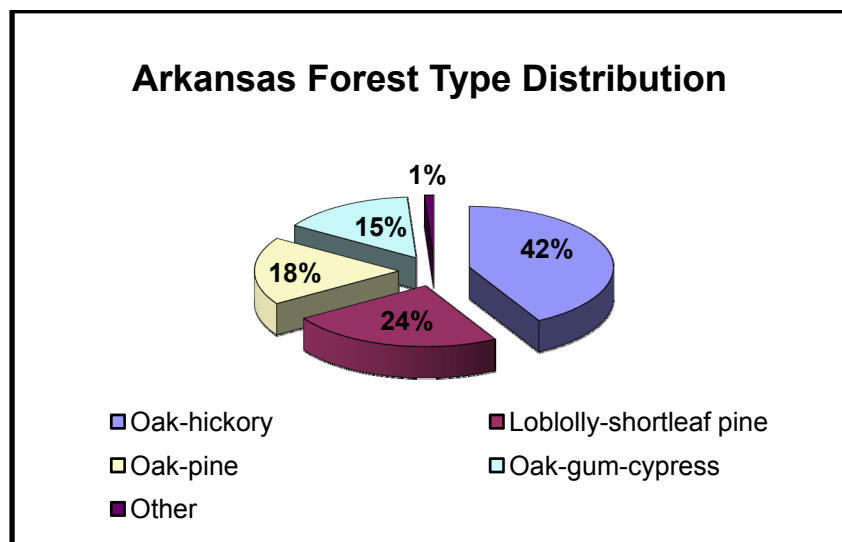


Forest Health Highlights

2009

The Resource

Arkansas' forests cover 18.8 million acres, more than 50% of the state's land area. The majority of the state's forested land, some 10.6 million acres, is in non-industrial private ownership, while approximately 2.3 million acres are in national forests. Arkansas' forests are prized for their scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation and providing wildlife habitat from the Ozark and Ouachita Mountains to the Mississippi River. Major forest types in the state include oak-hickory, loblolly-shortleaf pine, oak-pine, and oak-gum-cypress.



Forest Health Influences and Programs

Southern pine beetle (SPB) is Arkansas' most significant forest insect pest. However, in 2009 no SPB activity was reported, a trend that has lasted for more than 10 years. The Arkansas Forestry Commission is offering cost-share incentives to landowners for thinning and restoration work as part of their comprehensive SPB Prevention Program. This program is eagerly sought and well received by landowners. The state is also making special efforts to reach out to minority and underserved landowners. The SPB Prevention Program enrolled 238 tracts covering 10,275 acres in 2009.

Ips and black turpentine beetle are often attracted to trees stressed by drought or damaged during harvest operations. Statewide, populations of these beetles were below normal; Arkansas had a generally wet summer, reducing drought stress on trees. Thinning in pines stands should be conducted to minimize damage to residual trees.

Oak decline and red oak borer induced mortality that was severe from 1999-2004, but has substantially subsided over most of northern and northwestern Arkansas.



USDA Forest Service photo

Populations of the borer have diminished and more normal rainfall patterns have returned, resulting in a reduction in dieback and mortality. However, damaged trees that do survive are extensively riddled by borer tunnels and decay fungi so the results of the decline will persist until the damaged trees are eventually harvested. Conditions favorable for the development of future oak decline events persist over thousands of acres. Episodic drought, advanced age, and poor site quality of the state's oak forests indicate make this a serious and persistent problem. Isolated pockets of red oak borer still crop up, but nothing on the scale of 1999-2004.



Eastern Tent Caterpillar (*Malscosoma americanum*) infestations were high in most areas. Actual damage from this common defoliator was negligible.

Fall webworm, a common but noticeable pest was extremely heavy in many areas of Arkansas this year.

Gypsy moth trapping is used to make early detections of gypsy moth introduced to the state. No moths were caught in 2009. This is the fourth year with no gypsy moth in Arkansas.

Chinese privet is but one of a number of non-native, invasive plants causing problems for foresters and land managers in Arkansas. Cooperative programs are addressing some high-value areas such as designated natural areas, forested urban parks and forest regeneration sites. The City of Little Rock conducted an on-going eradication effort in one of their parks.

A severe ice storm on January 27 & 28 impacted much of the northern third of Arkansas. Thirty counties were declared a disaster area with ice accumulations up to 2.5 inches. Damage ranged from light to total devastation. Arkansas received a stimulus grant to assist in the clean up and restoration efforts. This ice storm will have long term impacts as damaged trees are hit by insects and as diseases. Decay fungi have unlimited sites to gain entry into trees and cause problems for years to come. Timber degrade will be extensive in damaged trees.

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

In the spring of 2009, 6 **emerald ash borer** (EAB) trap trees were created in 3 sites in Clay County by the USDA Forest Service. The Arkansas Forestry Commission monitored the trees throughout the summer and assisted in cutting & sampling the trees. No EAB were found.

The Arkansas Forestry Commission cooperated in the **Early Detection Rapid Response Program** by placing 18 traps in groups of 3 at 6 different sites identified by APHIS as receiving solid wood packaging from overseas sources. Traps were monitored every 2 weeks for 20 weeks. No new to the US species were caught, but 1 new to Arkansas was caught.

Forest Health Assistance in Arkansas

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