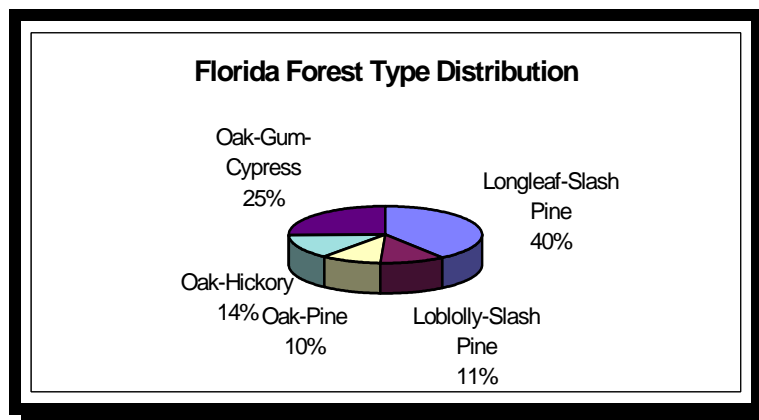


The Resource

Florida's forests cover 15.7 million acres, about 40% of the state's land area. Eighty percent of the forested land is privately owned, with 5.5 million acres in nonindustrial private ownership. National forests in Florida occupy approximately 1.03 million acres. Florida's forests are prized for their scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation and providing wildlife habitat across the most of the state. Major forest types in Florida include oak-hickory, loblolly and shortleaf pine, longleaf and slash pine, and oak-gum-cypress.



Forest health monitoring (FHM) activities are cooperative efforts between the USDA Forest Service and the Florida Department of Agriculture's Division of Forestry. The FHM program in Florida 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:

- Sustainable management of private forest lands
- Protection and development of urban and community forest resources
- Increasing underserved citizen participation in forestry programs

Forest Influences

Southern pine beetle (SPB) activity was minimal in Florida in 2005, with only seven small infestations reported, totaling 15 acres. The state continues to promote SPB prevention using a multi-media approach and a cost-share landowner assistance program. Pine engraver beetles (*Ips spp.*) and black turpentine beetles displayed widespread activity in areas where pines sustained substantial stress from the four 2004 hurricanes. The impact is particularly severe in residential and wildland-urban interface areas where landowners face high tree removal costs. 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.

Pink hibiscus mealybug was first reported in the state in June 2002, in Broward County. It has since spread to other counties in southern Florida, and is being controlled by the release of two species of parasitic wasps.

The lobate lac scale, a native of India, was first detected in Florida in 1999 and spread rapidly over the state from Palm Beach County southward; it has become a serious pest on numerous species of trees and shrubs. Ironically, one of the tree species most heavily impacted by the scale is *Melaleuca*, which is itself a non-native invasive plant.

Pitch canker is an important destructive forest disease in Florida. Major damage to slash pine plantations in proximity to poultry production facilities has been noted. No major problems were reported in 2005.

Annosum root rot is occasionally a serious problem in Florida's pine plantations, and has resulted in premature liquidation of some infected stands. It is expected to increase in importance as thinnings increase in frequency.

Two non-native climbing fern species continue to expand their range in Florida. Old World climbing fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*) now infests over 110,000 acres in 24 central and south Florida counties, while Japanese climbing fern (*Lygodium japonicum*) occurs in 57 counties throughout the state. The rapid expansion of these species since 1993 has been unprecedented, and further expansion is anticipated, in part due to the disturbances created by the 2004 hurricane season.

Cogongrass continues to spread in forested and non-forested sites throughout the state. This non-native invasive plant is spread primarily through movement of contaminated equipment and soil. Infestations significantly reduce forest site productivity and wildlife habitat quality.

Weather caused relatively little heavy property losses in Florida in 2005.

Sudden Oak Death surveys were conducted during 2005 by pathologists from Mississippi State University. The surveys did not indicate the presence of the *Phytophthora ramorum* pathogen in Florida.

A recently-discovered exotic red bay ambrosia beetle appears to be vectoring a vascular wilt fungus that is killing red bay at an alarming rate. While currently limited to the northeastern part of the state, it is expected to spread rapidly.

Forest Health Assistance in Florida

For further information or assistance, contact:

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