

# 2005 Forest Health Highlights

## Rhode Island



January 2006

### The Resource

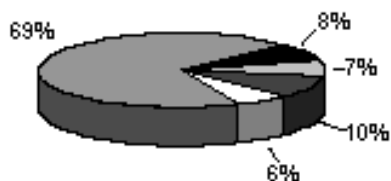
**F**orest land in Rhode Island is owned primarily by individuals who view their land as a source of enjoyment and a resource to be protected. The existence of intense public debate related to any impact on undeveloped lands is indicative of citizen concerns for the amenities provided by these lands, whether privately or publicly held. Rhode Island's forests are valued as a source of clean air, protected ground and surface water, wildlife habitat, wood fiber, and recreational opportunities.

- **55% of the State is forested (371,800 acres)**

#### Out of the forested area:

- **91.8% timberland**
- **8.2% noncommercial or reserved forest land**

#### Major Forest Types:



- oak/pine (8%)
- northern hardwoods (7%)
- other (10%)
- elm/wash. red maple (6%)
- oak/hickory (69%)

### Special Issues

The forests of Rhode Island are monitored annually to assess forest condition. These surveys help to determine forest stressors and damage. Special evaluations are undertaken to ascertain cause. To incorporate forest health in urban and suburban tree management, the Rhode Island Division of Forest Environment provides technical information and workshops to arborists, who are regulated by the State arborist licensing statute.

The most significant forest health issues in the State are defoliators. The **winter moth**, recently discovered in eastern Massachusetts, has quickly moved across Rhode Island. During 2005, this nonnative insect was confirmed in all east bay communities and as far west as Westerly on the Connecticut border. The affected area includes Bristol, Newport, Kent, and Washington Counties.

The defoliation was compounded by impacts from **gypsy moth**, affecting over 3,100 acres in the spring, and **orange-striped oakworm**, impacting almost 16,000 acres in the late summer. The damage occurred over similar areas in the towns of Coventry and Scituate in Providence and Kent Counties. Fall egg mass surveys for the gypsy moth indicate that populations will be very high in the same general area again in 2006 and it is likely that more acres will be affected.

To combat these defoliators, the Division of Forest Environment Forest Health staff is providing technical information to citizens in a series of town meetings in coordination with the Division of Agriculture Pesticide Applicator Licensing unit.

Little if any **hemlock woolly adelgid** was reported in 2005. Populations and new damage were down for the second year in a row. Mapping and evaluation of stands 10 acres and larger in Kent and Washington Counties is ongoing. The adelgid

### National Forest Health Monitoring Program

In cooperation with the USDA Forest Service, Rhode Island participates in the National Forest Health Monitoring Program. The program's objective is to assess trends in tree condition and forest stressors. All of the New England States have been involved since the program was initiated in 1990. A healthy forest is defined as having the capacity for renewal, for recovery from a wide range of disturbances, and for retention of its ecological resiliency.



The overall health of the forests in New England is good, with various damage agents present at different times and locations. Results from permanent sample sites indicate that there has been minimal change in crown condition in recent years. There are varying impacts from forest fragmentation, drought, fire, insects, and pathogens. The most significant pests are those that have arrived from other parts of the world, such as the gypsy moth, beech bark disease, and hemlock woolly adelgid. A summary report of *Forest Health Monitoring in the Northeastern United States* can be found at <http://fhm.fs.fed.us>.

### For More Information



RI Dept. of Environmental Management  
Division of Forest Environment  
1037 Hartford Pike  
North Scituate, RI 02857  
(401) 647-3367

Forest Health Protection  
USDA Forest Service  
P.O. Box 640  
Durham, NH 03824  
(603) 868-7709

