2006 Forest Health Highlights
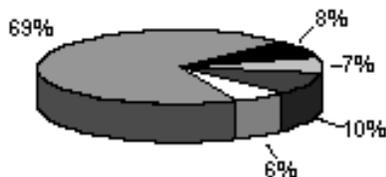
Rhode Island

Red Maple

The Resource

Forest 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/ash/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.

Part of the monitoring effort incorporates annual aerial surveys, which are conducted to map forest damage throughout the State. Most of the damage mapped in 2006 was from a complex of defoliating insects around the reservoir region in the central part of the State, on the border of Providence and Kent Counties.

The most severe defoliation and the largest area was from the **orange-striped oakworm** which affected about 9,350 acres of red oak, a decrease from the 16,000 acres mapped in 2005. Overlapping much of that same area was 4,000 acres of defoliation from both **gypsy moth** and **forest tent caterpillar**. There were also some small patches of gypsy moth and forest tent caterpillar in Newport and Bristol Counties.

The **winter moth** was a concern in 2005, but populations diminished in 2006 and only small patches of defoliation east of the bay, in Bristol and Newport Counties, were detected.

To inform the public regarding impact from these defoliators, the Division of Forest Environment Forest Health staff is providing technical information to citizens in coordination with the Division of Agriculture.

Hemlock woolly adelgid, an introduced species**,** remains present throughout the State. Populations may be rising again due to the recent mild winters. The adelgid will probably continue to have an impact on hemlock trees for many years.

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.

Forest Health Monitoring Sites

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.