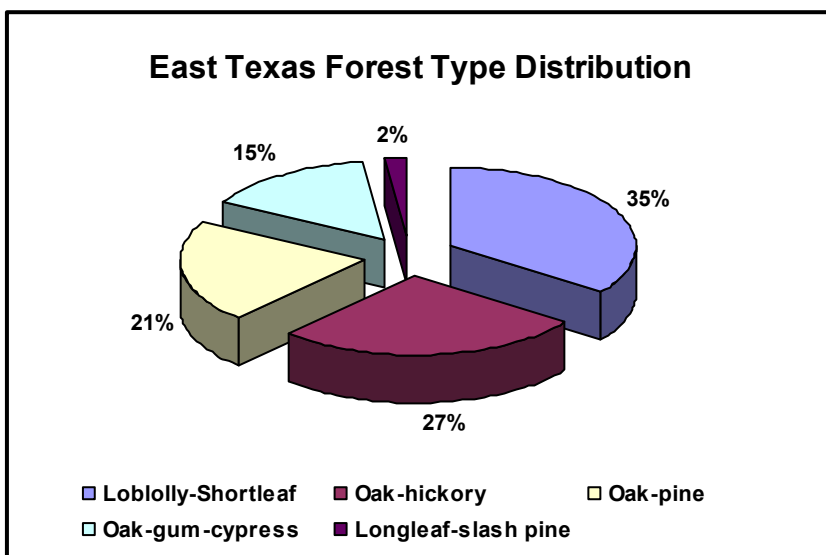


Forest Health Highlights 2008

The Resource

Texas' forests cover 14.6 million acres, more than half of the eastern section of the state where the climate supports trees. The majority of the state's forested land, some 10.7 million acres, is in non-industrial private ownership, while approximately 576,000 acres are in national forests. Texas' forests are prized for their scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation and providing wildlife habitat throughout eastern Texas. Major forest types in Texas include loblolly-shortleaf pine, oak-hickory, mixed oak-pine, and oak-gum-cypress. Longleaf-slash pine accounts for only 2% of the forest.



Forest Influences and Programs

Hurricane Ike came ashore on Galveston Island as a Category II storm on September 13, 2008 and moved north through East Texas. Texas Forest Service Forest Pest Management and Forestry Inventory and Analysis (FIA) personnel conducted aerial (digital aerial sketchmapping) and ground surveys to determine the damage to the timber resources in East Texas. Damage from Ike was more sporadic compared to Hurricane Rita which came through East Texas in 2005. Ike caused moderate damage in hardwood and some pine stands in Montgomery, Liberty, Jefferson, Hardin, and San Jacinto counties. As would be expected, sporadic light scattered damage occurred in heavily thinned stands and around stand edges, especially adjacent to roads, fields, clearcuts, and other open areas. Stands managed for red-cockaded woodpecker in National Forests seemed to be particularly prone to damage. Damage was NOT observed in contiguous pine stands that had not been recently thinned.

Timber damage and forest health information related to this hurricane was posted on the Texas Forest Service web site by September 16, 2008. See the Texas Forest Service web site for details.

<http://texasforests-service.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=5584>

<http://texasforests-service.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=5718>

<http://texasforests-service.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=5588>

1. Scattered Light – estimated less than 5% damage on all stand types in this area.

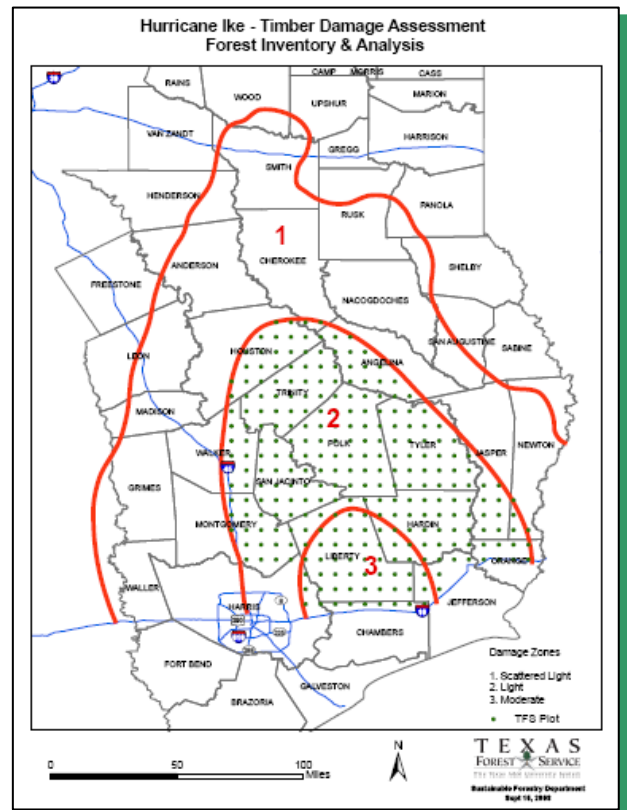
2. Light – estimated 5% - 10% damage on all stand types in this area. Note: Dot grid in areas 1 and 2 represents FIA plots that were visited to assess damage.

3. Moderate – possible 10% to 50% damage on open canopy stand in this area; <25% damage on all other stands.

Damaged timber – 289 million cubic feet (235,000 acres); value \$167 million (Damaged includes: trees that are uprooted, snapped off, leaning more than 45 degrees, or are likely to die within 12 months).

Affected timber – an additional 323 million cubic feet of timber was impacted (238,000 acres); value \$184 million (Affected includes: trees that are leaning less than 45 degrees, have lost only part of their crown, have only a loss of foliage, or otherwise are not subject to imminent death).

Salvage – estimated at about 20%.



Southern pine beetle (SPB) is the most important forest insect pest in Texas. Historically, the most severe SPB problems in the South have occurred in Texas. However, since 1994, SPB populations in Texas have been very low. No SPB infestations were reported on state, private, or federal lands in Texas from 1998 through 2008. A trapping system developed by the Texas Forest Service and now used in 12 southern states is used to forecast annual SPB infestation trends. Traps are deployed in the early spring to predict SPB infestation levels for that year. Early indications are that southern pine beetle activity in 2009 will continue to be very low.

Afghan Pine Chalcid, an unidentified chalcid, probably Eurytomidae, was found attacking Afghan pine in the El Paso area. Significant activity from this insect has not been noted in the past. A fact sheet on this new pest was posted on web sites of the Texas Forest Service, International Society of Arboriculture Texas, and Texas A&M University Landscape IPM. The fact sheet can be seen at

<http://txforests-service.tamu.edu/main/popup.aspx?id=5716>



Oak wilt was confirmed in one new county – Potter County (Amarillo) in 2008 based on samples sent to the Texas A&M University Plant Disease Diagnostic lab. In addition, Harris County (Houston) was placed back on the infected county list due to a new occurrence of the disease found there. This was the first report of a new oak wilt infection site in Harris County in several years. (www.texasoakwilt.org)



Gypsy moth (GM) became an interesting subject in 2008 in Texas. There are two strains of the GM – Asian and European – and there is



one major difference between the two. Female moths of the European GM are incapable of flight whereas Asian GM females are strong fliers

and are attracted to lights at night. Males of both strains of GM can fly. At least four interceptions of Asian GM were made at Texas ports in 2008. The first was at the Port of Houston on August 18; the second and third were at Brownsville on September 8 and November 5, respectively; and the fourth again at Houston on December 9. Eggs, larvae, and adult moths were found

on ships that sailed from Asian ports. Hopefully no stage of this insect has come ashore to infest plants growing in Texas. The situation will be closely monitored.

Soapberry Borer, a buprestid beetle (*Agrilus prionurus*) has been attacking and killing western soapberry in some 20 counties in Texas from Dallas to Corpus Christi to Laredo. This is believed to be a Mexican species that has extended its range into Texas during the past five years. A fact sheet discussing this pest has been posted on the Texas Forest Service web site: <http://texasforestservicetamu.edu/main/popup.aspx?id=5316>



Exotic invasive species are gaining increased attention as a serious problem impacting forests. The new *Invaders of Texas* program is taking the message of exotic invasive pests to the general public by enlisting the aid of trained citizen scientists to detect and report invasive species in their neighborhoods. Numerous articles about exotic pests that are present or are potential Texas invaders have been prepared by Texas Forest Service forest health specialists and others and are posted at the Texas invasives partnership web site (<http://www.texasinvasives.org>).

Approximately 2.5 acres of exotic invasive **cogongrass** in Tyler County was treated with herbicide and prescribed fire in the fall of 2007 as a first step in an attempt to eradicate the grass from this site. Follow-up inspections were conducted in 2008 and additional treatments will be conducted in the spring of 2009.

Dutch Elm Disease (DED) has recently been confirmed in elm trees in northeast Tarrant County (Flower Mound, North Richland Hills, Collyville, and Southlake). Arborists, city foresters, and homeowners are concerned about the situation. The exact number of elm trees that have died due to DED in this area is unknown, but the number could be as high as 50 or more.

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The wood wasp *Sirex noctilio* (Siricidae) is known to cause mortality to loblolly pine (and other pines) in New Zealand, South America, South Africa, and other areas. Recently *Sirex noctilio* was found to be established in New York and there is concern that it could become established in the vast pine forests of the southern and southeastern United States. In October 2007 the Texas Forest Service initiated a one year survey in East Texas partially funded by APHIS PPQ to check for the presence of *Sirex noctilio*. Lindgren funnel traps were deployed in 14 locations in 12 counties and baited with a lure. At the end of December 2008, **no *Sirex noctilio* had been trapped**. However, the following siricids (all females) were collected, mostly in the months of November and December:

- Sirex nigricornis* 36 individuals
- Sirex edwardsii* 23 individuals
- Erotremex formosanus* 10 individual
- Tremex columba* 6 individuals
- Urocerus cressone* 2 individual



Forest Health Assistance in Texas

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