

## **Forest Health Highlights in Texas 2019**

- Texas A&M Forest Service and partners deployed 523 purple panel traps across Texas. This is 73 additional traps over 2018. Partners included USFS Forest Health Protection, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and US Army National Guard. Traps were baited with hexenol and concentrated in east Texas and in urban areas along the I-35 corridor from Dallas/Fort Worth to San Antonio. No EAB adults were recovered from Harrison County. Multiple traps in Cass and Marion Counties each caught multiple EAB adults. One Cass Co. trap trapped 31 EAB adults. Positive ID of larvae recovered from a harvested tree in Tarrant County adds Tarrant to the list of infested Texas counties. Supplemental traps were placed in the Eagle Mountain Lake area and produced large numbers of EAB adults (137 on one trap). Several trees were girdled to serve as trap trees. These will be harvested in the coming weeks to determine EAB density. Federal quarantines in these counties have yet to be established. State quarantines are in effect. TFS maintains a website ([tfsweb.tamu.edu/eab](http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/eab)) providing information about EAB and hosts workshops to educate Texans on how to properly identify EAB and how to manage infected trees.
- Oak wilt continues to occur in 76 documented counties in Texas, mostly counties west of I-35 from Dallas to San Antonio across I-20 to Lubbock. Texas A&M Forest Service personnel contribute technical assistance to landowners to help educate landowners and the public and to minimize the impact and spread of this disease. Technical information on oak wilt is made available via a web page devoted exclusively to oak wilt in Central Texas ([texasoakwilt.org](http://texasoakwilt.org)) Almost 165,000 users consulted this web site. Workshops and trainings are held across many counties in the state with confirmed oak wilt disease present. During 2019, 21 trenches with a combined length of 78,635 feet or 14.9 miles were installed to help stop the spread of oak wilt as part of the federally-funded Cooperative Oak Wilt Suppression Project. Since the inception of the program in Texas, more than 250 miles of oak wilt trenches have been installed to help control the spread of this deadly disease.
- TFS continues to administer the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program in East Texas. During 2019, through funding from USFS-Forest Health Protection, TFS provided over \$150,000 to 48 landowners to assist in the thinning of overly dense pine forests reducing their risk of an SPB attack. Also during 2019 through the SPB Prevention Program more than 2,200 acres of overly dense pine stands were thinned on 23 East Texas forested properties. Since the inception of the program in 2003, more than 1,900 landowners have utilized over \$7 million to thin more than 130,000 acres of overly dense pine stands in East Texas.
- During 2019 TFS forest health staff continued to restore Ponderosa Pine forests in the Davis Mountains region. These forest over the past decade have been subjected to severe wildfires, extreme drought and subsequent mountain pine beetle infestations. This area is home to southern most extent of the Ponderosa Pine population and TFS working with USFS-Forest Health Protection, Southern Research Station and The Nature Conservancy has led the way for restoring Ponderosa Pine and working to improve the overall health of existing forested areas.

- During 2019 Texas A&M Forest Service participated in a USFS/UF joint study on the distribution of *X. glabratus*. Traps were placed in 18 counties (Angelina, Cass, Cherokee, Harrison, Houston, Jasper, Marion, Nacogdoches, Panola, Rusk, Sabine, Shelby, Smith, Trinity, Tyler, Upshur, Van Zandt and Wood Counties). One *X. glabratus* beetle was identified from a trap in Rusk County. Laurel wilt fungus has been identified from cultures taken in Angelina, Sabine, and Shelby Counties. We are waiting analysis of a sample redbay from Polk County that will most likely be confirmed as positive for LW. A trap in Trinity County caught a single *X. glabratus* but no laurel wilt fungus has been identified. Currently laurel wilt has only impacted a small area and number of trees but there is concern the disease could spread along the Texas coast into Mexico affecting the avocado industry (avocado trees are the largest commercially economic tree species impacted by laurel wilt to date).
- A perennial regeneration pest in east Texas, Texas Leaf Cutting Ants, continues to plague landowners. In 2018 TFS initiated a program to assist qualifying landowners by treating TLCA nests with PTM Insecticide (Fipronil). During 2019, over 50 nests were treated in across the sandier regions of east Texas. Trials with Leaf Saver ant bait are ingoing and it appears that it will be an effective “backup” to PTM. TFS management plans have been revised to reflect the threat of TLCA to recommend treatment before planting. The use of UAVs to count/locate nests prior to PTM treatment is being investigated.