Forest Health Watch

June 2004—Reports of Forest Pest Activities in New England and New York

Insect defoliators are back! This year their activity has been intense in many areas. Exotic pests continue to threaten the Northeast's forests relentlessly!

Insect Defoliators:
Forest tent caterpillar defoliation is much more noticeable this spring, particularly on sugar maple and oak. Heavy damage occurred in western Rutland County, Vermont, where it's been almost 25 year since the last outbreak. There are reports of large numbers of caterpillars spinning down from tree crowns and massing on tree trunks. This insect caused significant damage in Vermont in the early 1980s, which contributed to widespread reports of maple decline. Sugarbushes can also be impacted when defoliation is high. New Hampshire, northern New York (including the Fort Drum Army installation), and portions of Massachusetts are also reporting significant defoliation. Feeding is expected to continue into mid-June; however, affected trees may refoliate by mid-July.

Eastern tent caterpillar is also at higher levels this year in Vermont, New Hampshire, and New York. These insects create webs and are typically found on cherry and apple trees. The eastern tent caterpillar usually feeds earlier in the season than forest tent caterpillar.

Bruce spanworm defoliation has been reported in New Hampshire and Vermont. Trees infested with this early season defoliator can recover more rapidly from damage than from later season defoliators.

Gypsy moth is slightly on the increase in New York and New Hampshire. Some expanded areas of defoliation are expected in 2004.

Exotic Pests:
Hemlock woolly adelgid on eastern hemlock continues to spread in New England and New York. New infested stands have been identified in York County, Maine, outside of the Gerrish Island infestation. In New Hampshire, two new natural spread infestations were located and either removed or treated with soil-injected Merit. Also, lightly infested plant material that had been labeled adelgid-free was transported to six New Hampshire nurseries; all the stock was burned. Vermont also received infested plant material. The Vermont Agriculture Agency, along with the Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, is inspecting hemlock nursery stock around the State.

Pine shoot beetle findings in New York have expanded, and now encompass almost the entire State. The latest counties to be found infested are Clinton, Essex, Rensselaer, and Warren. Trapping was also continuing in Washington County. Quarantines are still in effect in New York, along with portions of northern Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

The national sudden oak death survey is underway, which includes all of New England and New York. The survey is targeting nursery perimeters and forested areas. The nearest findings of plant material infected with the fungus *Phytophthora ramorum* were in Pennsylvania on a camellia bonsai tree that originated from Specialty Plants in California and on a lilac bush at a nursery in Cape May

County, New Jersey. Infected plants from Monrovia Nursery in California have been found in Washington, Oregon, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

Surveys for the emerald ash borer will also be conducted to determine if this exotic pest is located within our region. Attempts are underway in southeastern Michigan to contain the insect within the larger areas where it has been found by creating ash free zones and to eliminate it from outlying infestations. Isolated infestations are also being eradicated in Ohio, Indiana, and Maryland.

Other Damage Agents:
Balsam woolly adelgid populations on the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire, the Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont, and in northern Maine have been contributing to the decline of balsam fir trees in many locations. Other natural and abiotic factors are also contributing to tree dieback and mortality.

Severe browning of northern white cedar has been reported in Connecticut and Vermont. In Connecticut the browning is attributed to severe winter damage. In Vermont the damage is caused by the arborvitae leaf miner; the damage has increased over last year due to higher insect population levels. Trees are expected to survive the damage—even those trees with up to 80 percent of the foliage affected—as new green shoots emerge.