FOREST HEALTH PROGRAM

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The Forest Health Program assists state and federal land managers to detect, evaluate, monitor, and take action against native and non-native pests. The overall program goal is to sustain the health and productivity of trees and forest ecosystems in America's urban and rural areas by reducing the impacts of insects, diseases, weeds, and wildfires.

Insect and Disease Suppression and Eradication

Invasive non-native pests pose a serious threat to our native tree populations. The Northeastern Area is working with other federal, state and local agencies to devise strategies to protect the region's forests while at the same time participating in a global economy. The Asian long-horned beetle (ALHB), gypsy moth, and Dutch elm disease are examples of exotic pests that threaten the health and productivity of urban forests within the Northeastern Area.

Asian Long-Horned Beetle

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Asian long-horned beetle (ALHB), a serious and widespread pest in China, is entering our country in the wooden packing material of imported goods from China. Since 1995, USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) inspectors have discovered infested wood packing from China in 26 locations in 14 states. Intensive eradication activities are occurring in several communities in the New York City and the Chicago metropolitan areas.

The beetle is devastating because it can kill its host tree, primarily maples and other hardwood trees, within a few years. The larvae bore large tunnels under the bark and into the wood, which girdles the branch. Repeated attacks cause dieback of the tree crown, and eventually death of the tree. Currently, chipping the infested trees has been successful at destroying the beetle. The ultimate objective of the program is the eradication of this pest.

In Chicago, ALHB infestations were detected at 3 separate locations in 1998. Estimates are 375 infested trees for Ravenswood, 33 infested trees for Addison, and 4 infested trees for Summit. Infested trees will be cut and destroyed during the winter. The Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry staff is assisting USDA APHIS and the Illinois Department of Agriculture with detection surveys, technical expertise, tree replanting, and public outreach efforts.

In Brooklyn and Queens, New York, The ALHB was first discovered in Brooklyn, NY attacking Norway maple trees in August, 1996. The New York State Agriculture and Markets in cooperation with APHIS identified a quarantine zone encompassing the area and began inspections of street and backyard trees and removal of host trees. As of September 1, 1998, 1206 trees have been removed in the Brooklyn and Queens area.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NY DEC) in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service was charged with replacing trees on private property. As of the spring of 1998, 1250 trees had been planted in the Brooklyn and Queens area. The planting program continues as beetle surveys identify new infestations.

In Amityville, New York, the ALHB was discovered about one month after the initial infestation in Brooklyn. During 1997 and 1998 about 640 trees were removed. In 1998, three municipalities requested and received funding for tree planting efforts. In August 1998, a new infestation was found two miles east of Amityville in Lindenhurst. The continuing discovery of infested trees in previously inspected private and public properties has made replanting efforts difficult.

A team made up of staff from the Northeastern Area, North Central Forest Research, the USDA APHIS, and New York City and New York State agencies received the prestigious USDA Honor Award for its work in combating the ALHB in Brooklyn and Amityville, New York.

ALHB home page: http://willow.ncfes.umn.edu/asianbeetle/beetle.htm

Actual size of female and male Asian long-horned beetles

Gypsy Moth

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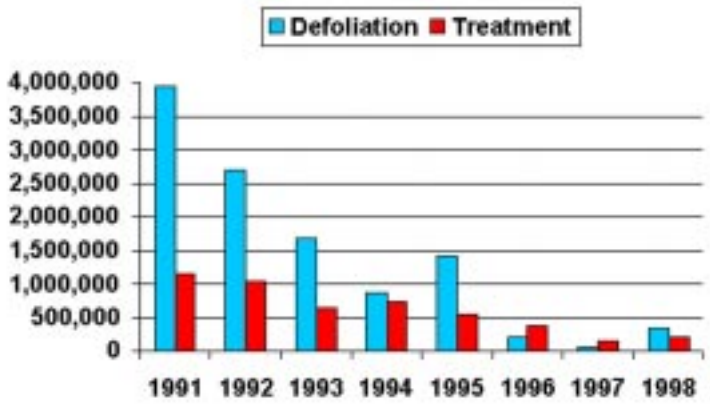
The gypsy moth, the most serious insect pest of oak and other hardwood forests in the eastern United States, consumes the leaves of over 300 different tree species during the spring and early summer. This leaf damage seriously weakens affected trees, leaving them vulnerable to other life threatening diseases and insects. Gypsy moths change the natural diversity of the forests, degrading water quality and wildlife habitat, and impacting recreational activities.

Gypsy moths are currently established in all or parts of 17 states and the District of Columbia. Since the mid-1990s a fungus that kills only gypsy moth caterpillars has mitigated the damage caused by this exotic pest. The insect affected fewer trees in 1997 than in any year since 1960. However, in 1998, some states again experienced increases in gypsy moth populations. Since fungus caused reductions in gypsy moth populations are highly variable and unpredictable, insecticide treatments will continue to be an important tool for protecting forests and trees.

In 1998, the Forest Service provided an estimated $7,377,000 in financial assistance and technical assistance to protect 200,848 acres in Delaware, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Utah, Virginia, Wisconsin and West Virginia. Although these funds were a decrease from the previous seven-year average of $12,368,000, the allocation supported suppression, eradication and “Slow the Spread” projects.

Figure 1. Total number of acres defoliated by gypsy moth and the acreage that received treatment to control gypsy moth.



Source: GMDigest, Forest Health Protection, Morgantown, WV.

Gypsy moth home page: http://www.fs.fed.us/na/morgantown/fhp

Dutch Elm Disease

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The Northeastern Area, the District of Columbia's Department of Public Works - Trees and Landscape staff, and the USDI National Park Service- National Capital Area are cooperating to retard an outbreak of Dutch elm disease that is occurring in the District of Columbia. The Northeastern Area provided $300,000 to the Department of Public Works to assist with eradicating Dutch elm disease in the city. The disease is controlled by promptly removing dead and dying elms infested by the beetles that spread the disease.

Forest Health Monitoring Program

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The National Forest Health Monitoring (FHM) Program was developed in response to increasing concern for the potential effects of atmospheric pollutants, global climate change, and a variety of insect, disease and other stressors on the health of our national forests. Many of the stressors that negatively impact the health of our national forests also negatively impact our urban forests; therefore, the principles of the National FHM Program can also be used to track the health conditions of our urban forests. In 1998, two innovative forest health monitoring projects were funded to assess the management needs and health of trees in community forests using criteria complimentary to those of the National Forest Health Monitoring Program.

Hazard Tree Management Program

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A Regional Hazard Tree Training Team, composed of staff from the St. Paul, MN, Durham, NH, and Morgantown, WV field offices, was established in 1992 to develop a training program for the delivery of hazard tree identification and management information to federal and state partners in the Northeastern Area.

This program focuses on conducting “Train the Trainer" workshops, which provide states and urban forestry professionals with the tools and resources needed to conduct their own workshops. In 1998, a total of 11 workshops and four lecture sessions were held. Seven of the workshops were in response to requests for assistance after the January ice storm in New England and New York.

Forest Health Publications

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The Forest Health Program transfers new technology and information on forest health management to landowners and state partners via annual forest reports, popular publications, technical publications, press releases, videos, and other technology transfer methods. These publications provide timely information on forest health issues such as the impacts and management implications of natural disasters and forest pests, and the application of new technologies to sustain the health and productivity of our trees and forest ecosystems. Below is a listing of publications produced in 1998.

"Ice Storm 1998: How to Determine Percent Live Crown Loss in Hardwoods Before Leaf-Out." Information Sheet #1. USDA Forest Service, Durham, NH. 1pp.

"Ice Storm 1998: Lucky Break for Wildlife." Information Sheet #5. USDA Forest Service, Durham, NH. 1pp.

"Ice Storm 1998: Helping Trees Recover From Ice Storms." Information Sheet #8. USDA Forest Service, Durham, NH 1pp.

"Massachusetts Tree Wardens Guide to Common Insects and Diseases." 1998. Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management and University of Massachusetts Cooperative Extension.

"Urban Forest Health Training Manual: 1998 Draft Workbook." Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Area, and the Northeast Center for Urban and Community Forestry.

"Urban Forest Health Needs Assessment Survey: Results and Recommendations." 1998. NA-TP-01-98. Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry. St. Paul, MN . 28pp.

"Growing Needs of Urban and Community Forestry Programs." 1998. Congressional Briefing Paper. USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Area. St. Paul, MN. 2pp.

"How To Identify and Manage Dutch Elm Disease." 1998. NA-PR-07-98. USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry. St. Paul, MN. 27pp.