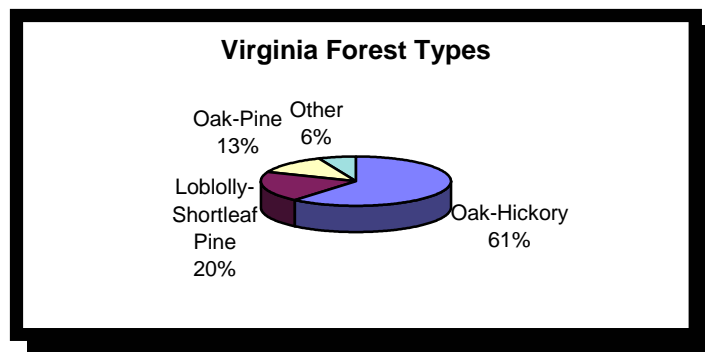


The Resource

Virginia's forests cover 15.4 million acres, about two thirds of the state's land area. The majority of the state's forested land, some 10 million acres, is in nonindustrial private ownership, while approximately 1.4 million acres are in national forests. Virginia's forests are prized for their scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation and providing wildlife habitat from the Appalachian Mountains to the lowlands of the Atlantic Coastal Plain. Major forest types in the state include oak-hickory, loblolly and shortleaf pine, and mixed oak-pine. Other minor types account for 3% of the acreage.



Forest health monitoring (FHM) activities are cooperative efforts between the USDA Forest Service and the Virginia Department of Forestry. The FHM program includes periodic measurement of fixed plots as well as regular aerial and ground surveys to detect forest damage.

Special Issues

Key issues which State and federal programs are addressing cooperatively include:

- Sustainable management of private forest lands
- Protection and development of urban and community forest resources
- Increasing participation by underserved citizens in forestry programs
- Forest land fragmentation

Forest Influences

Gypsy moth defoliation began to affect Virginia's hardwood forests in 1984 and became an increasingly serious problem over the next decade. In 2002, populations were highly variable due to a late spring freeze, continuing drought, the effects of *Entomophaga* larval disease, and the continuing suppression program. Aerial surveys detected 51,845 acres of defoliation, a significant decrease from 2001 levels.

Southern pine beetle (SPB) activity was reported in 17 counties in 2002, three of which were classified as epidemic. Most of the activity was in the western portion of the state.

Hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) was first reported in Virginia in 1950. It has since spread over most of the state, infesting and killing eastern and Carolina hemlock. Except for ornamental trees in landscape settings, chemical control of HWA is not practical, and major losses of these ecologically valuable trees are occurring.

Dogwood anthracnose is a disease of cool, moist areas in the higher elevation forests of western Virginia. It is currently found in 48 counties and is causing significant mortality to native dogwoods.

Weather caused significant damage to Virginia's forests in 2002. A late spring freeze produced severe damage in mountain counties; its effects were widespread but more moderate across the rest of the state. Winds from spring and summer storms produced damage in western counties, and a tornado in April caused heavy local damage south of Lynchburg.

Forest Health Assistance in Virginia

For further information or assistance, contact:

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