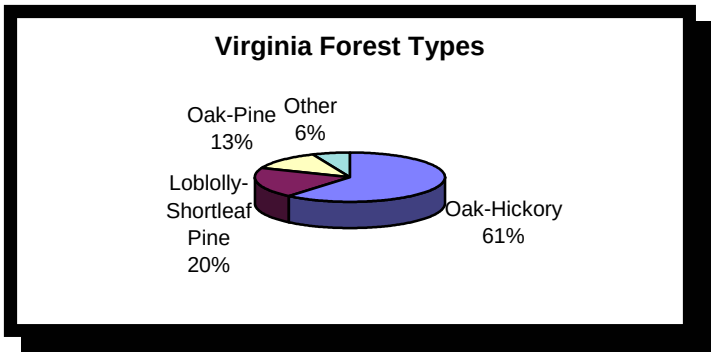
Virginia

Forest Health Highlights 2006

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 2006, populations were moderate, with treatments conducted on 86,148 acres.
Southern pine beetle (SPB) activity remained at low levels in 2006. The state offers landowner cost-share incentives for thinning and restoration work as part of a SPB Prevention Program. The state has made special effort to conserve native longleaf as part of this program.

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.
Emerald ash borer made its first appearance in Fairfax County in 2004 as a result of the importation of infested nursery stock from Michigan. Prompt eradication action was taken by the State and the infestation was successfully eliminated. However, spread of the beetle from adjacent infested areas in Maryland remains a significant concern.
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 little damage to Virginia's forests in 2006.
Sudden Oak Death surveys were initiated in Virginia in 2003 and continued in 2006. The surveys focused on the perimeters of horticultural nurseries that received potentially infected stock from shippers in California and Oregon. No infected sites were identified in the state.
Oak decline continues to be a widespread problem, due to effects of both drought and flooding (on different sites) and to increasing age of oak stands. Drought and high summer temperatures contributed to this problem in 2006.

Forest Health Assistance in Virginia
For further information or assistance, contact:

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