



# Technical Bulletin

Forest Health  
Notes # 13  
Issued 6/2008

## Forest Health Task Force Update – June 4, 2008

The Forest Health Task Force was initiated in August 2006 to address forest health issues of regional concern and to advise, guide and support the Southern Group of State Foresters (SGSF) in responding to emerging issues and in implementing programs affecting southern forest resource health. Additional objectives are to engage in strategic collaboration on region-wide or multi-state projects, to provide a forum for discussion about important forest health opportunities and challenges on the regional or national level, to identify and promote training opportunities for forest health staff, and to assist in the development of a regional response plan for forest health emergencies. Dr. Ronald Billings, Texas Forest Service, is Chairman of the Task Force while James Johnson, Georgia Forestry Commission, serves as Vice-chairman. Other members include one forest pest specialist from each of the southern states and representatives from the USDA Forest Service, Southern Research Station and Forest Health Protection.

Since the most recent update in December 2007, FHTF members have been involved in the annual South-wide survey to predict southern pine beetle (SPB) infestation trends with pheromone traps. Trap catches across the South in 2008 suggest declining or continued low SPB activity. Even counties in central Georgia that include the Oconee National Forest, where SPB was at outbreak levels in 2007, appear to be experiencing reduced beetle activity with increases in rainfall.

State forest pest specialists (who serve also as FHTF members) continue to coordinate and or assist in the coordination of their respective state's involvement in the SPB Prevention and Restoration Program. Jointly, from FY 2003-2007, the 13 participating states have utilized \$17,521,025 in federal cost shares as an incentive to treat 115,592 acres of precommercial thinning, 85,158 acres of first thinning of pulpwood stands, 121,729 acres of prescribed burns and 72,753

acres of restoration. The goal is to reduce susceptibility of pine forests to SPB outbreaks on state and private lands and to restore forests that have suffered SPB outbreaks in recent years. *Mississippi's SPB Prevention Program was reported on and posted on this website 2/27/2008.*

SPB prevention programs have recently been aided by the availability of SPB hazard maps for the southern states. Developed by the USDA Forest Service Forest Health Enterprise Team, these maps are constructed at a 30-meter resolution within a GIS environment using a set of forest parameter layers (basal area, diameter, stand density index etc.) and a multi-criteria modeling framework. The hazard maps for each state are available at [http://www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth/technology/nidrm\\_spb.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth/technology/nidrm_spb.shtml). *Recently Luke Donald has been hired to coordinate this effort through Forestry Extension with Dr. Andy Londo directing at Mississippi State University.*

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among the thirteen southern states regarding cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*) has been prepared by James Johnson, Georgia Forestry Commission, reviewed by all State Forest Health Specialists, and will be presented to state and federal forestry agency chiefs for approval. The intent of this MOU is to coordinate and promote the detection, area-wide management and/or eradication of this invasive weed wherever it occurs in the southern U.S. Cogongrass, one of the most aggressive non-native grasses affecting forestry in the South, has become well established in Mississippi, Alabama and Florida, but threatens to spread in other states.

The redbay ambrosia beetle - laurel wilt complex continues its range of establishment in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. The current distribution map and other information are available at



# Technical Bulletin

Forest Health  
Notes # 13  
Issued 6/2008

## Forest Health Task Force Update – June 4, 2008

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/foresthealth/laurelwilt/index.shtml>.

The FHTF plans to hold its annual meeting in conjunction with the Southern Forest Insect Work Conference, scheduled for August 4-7, 2008 in Chattanooga. Also, just prior to the SFIWC, the FHTF plans to conduct “on-the-spot” field training on southern pine beetle detection, ground check and control operations for the benefit of the new generation of southern state pest coordinators. This training will probably be held in Georgia, if sufficient active infestations are present.

Sadly, word was received that Thomas (Tim) McClure, forest pest specialist with the state of Kentucky and a charter member of the FHTF, died of a heart attack on May 9 at the age of 54. Until another forest pest specialist can be hired, Stewart West will represent Kentucky on the Task Force.

The above report was submitted by Ronald F. Billings Chairman, Forest Health Task Force with *additions by T. Evan Nebeker, Task Force Member representing Mississippi, for additional information contact [tevannebeker@bellsouth.net](mailto:tevannebeker@bellsouth.net)*