



MISSISSIPPI FORESTRY COMMISSION

660 North Street, Suite 300 • Jackson, Mississippi 39202
Phone: (601) 359-1386 • Fax: (601) 359-1349 • www.mfc.ms.gov

Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program Fiscal Year 2015 PROGRAM NARRATIVE

Lead Contact(s):

Randy Chapin,

Forest Health Coordinator,

601-833-6621 (office)

601-835-0188 (fax)

601-405-5711 (cell phone)

rchapin@mfc.state.ms.us

Jim Hancock,

Grants Administrator/Longleaf Coordinator,

601-720-0238 (cell phone)

jhancock@mfc.mstate.ms.us

Stephen Dicke,

G.L. Switzer Professor of Forestry, Extension Forestry, MSU

steved@ext.msstate.edu

Purpose:

The Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) (*Dendroctonus frontalis* Zimmermann, SPB) has been damaging pine forests in Mississippi for hundreds, if not thousands of years. Many landowners have suffered losses related to the SPB, and some have even lost entire pine stands. Such widespread damage has grasped the public's attention in a manner unlike any other forestry issue in the South. Only proactive management activities, such as periodic thinnings can increase overall forest health and reduce the threat of a SPB outbreak.

To help landowners reduce the risk of a SPB outbreak on their pine forests, the US Forest Service - Forest Health Protection Southern Region has provided funds to cost-share pine thinning operations in Mississippi. The Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC) administers limited rates of \$75 per acre for pre-commercial thinning and first commercial pine thinnings. The Mississippi State University Extension Service provides on-site technical support. Restricted funds are available to qualifying pine stands within the area of SPB control priority.

During the fiscal year 2015 (FY2015), SPB Prevention Program funds will focus on our greatest need: reducing the outbreak threat of southern pine beetles on private forest lands in Northeastern Mississippi. Fall 2013 insect trappings in the Tombigbee Ranger District (Chickasaw County, MS) indicated that SPB populations were increasing, which elevates the likelihood of potential SPB outbreaks. Meanwhile, the International Paper Company Mill (located in Courtland, AL) closed in March 2014. When the International Paper Company Mill closed, this action cut the demand for pine pulpwood in half and downsized the available logging force. As a result, landowners are facing lower stumpage, fewer loggers for thinnings, and longer hauling distances for pine pulpwood for the foreseeable future. The combination of bad pine pulpwood markets with possible SPB outbreaks placed landowners under severe stress. The SPB FY2015 funds will encourage these landowners to thin and prevent SPB outbreaks. Funds will also help them financially survive the drastic reduction in their thinning income. The markets will recover eventually, but recovery could take years.

The proposed FY2015 cost share funds would be made available for pine forestland in fifteen Northeast Mississippi counties: Alcorn, Benton, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Clay, Itawamba, Lafayette, Lee, Marshall, Monroe, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tippah, Tishomingo, and Union. These are the same counties that were in the FY2014 focus area. The response has been overwhelming, so we will continue to focus on this same area for FY2015 funding.

Past Performance by Mississippi:

As listed below, the performance by the MFC and the Mississippi State University Extension Service has been excellent. Together, we have achieved all program goals set in recent years.

In FY15 cost-share funds were spent primarily to reduce the risk of SPB attacks by reducing the pine basal area, not on prescribed burning or tree planting.

Scope of Work:

This project will contribute to the goal of improving forest health and productivity through educational programs, technical assistance, and cost-share programs. Technical assistance will be provided to qualified landowners upon request. Participants must be private non-industrial forest landowners, that have land physically located in Mississippi.

The work will involve a collaborative effort between the MFC and extension foresters from the Mississippi State University Department of Forestry:

Objective 1: cost share first commercial thinning activities on qualified stands in Mississippi. Cost share rates will be \$75 / acre for either type of thinning activities
(Strategy 4.3)

Objective 2: Provide educational programs and technical assistance to landowners, foresters, and landowner associations in the areas of SPB identification and management, pine plantation thinning, forest health, and other related topics.
(Strategy 4.3)

Methodology and Timeline:

The project's objectives will be accomplished through the following activities (organized by S&PF Program funding type). The prevention project will be conducted by the Mississippi State University Extension Forester.

Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program:

- Conduct the cost-share thinning program across Mississippi. **2,887** acres will be thinned in the first commercial and/or pre-commercial thinning program.
- Host at least **2** workshops, forestry association meetings, field days, and other related activities. The workshops will be open to foresters, loggers, and landowners. Topics addressed will include: SPB biology, identification,

management, forest health, the cost share program, and other areas related to SPB prevention. Emphasis will be placed on the importance of pine thinning.

- Provide technical assistance to landowners (and others, as requested) on issues concerning SPB prevention and forest health.
- Stands must meet the following criteria:
 - Privately owned forestland located in Mississippi
 - Acreage: 10-acre minimum - 5,000-acre maximum
 - Must be rated as moderate to high hazard for SPB outbreak
 - Must be comprised of at least 70% loblolly, shortleaf, or slash pine
 - Pre-commercial stands must be between 4-12 years old, and have a stand density greater than 700 stems per acre.

This project will begin on October 1, 2015, and be completed by September 30, 2017.

Accomplishment Reporting:

The following accomplishment measures will be reported annually and when work is completed according to agency guidance for the Performance Progress Report (SF-PPR).

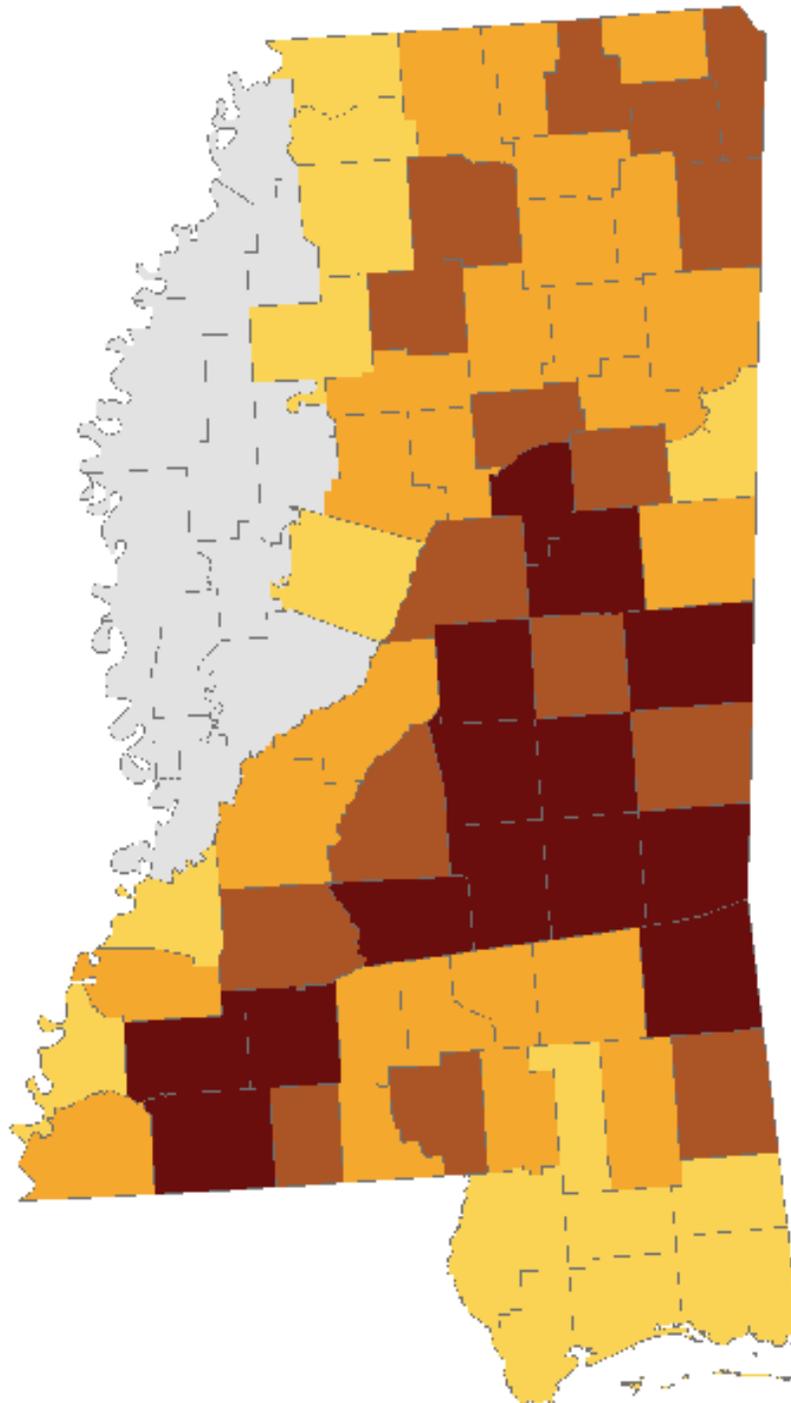
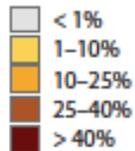
Accomplishment Measure	Measure Type*	Grant Target
Acres of forests thinned	National	2887
Educational programs conducted on the SPB, pine thinning, and forest health	National	2
Technical assistance provided	National	50

- Measure Type: National = National S&PF Program accomplishment/performance reporting measure
- ^ Calls for Technical assistance will be handled upon request. All requests for assistance will be met.



SOUTHERN PINE BEETLE COUNTY HAZARD RATING FOR Mississippi

Percent of county
rated as moderate
or high hazard*



*Hazard rating based on the US Forest Service 2012 National Insect and Disease Risk Map (NIDRM) over a 15 year period, 2013 – 2027.

-Moderate hazard = Areas projected to lose 11 to 24% of host basal area to SPB

-High hazard = Areas projected to lose 25% or more of host basal area to SPB

2015 Southern Pine Beetle Assistance Area

