



## Forest Health In Mississippi - 2010

The Mississippi Forestry Commission Forest Health program is ever expanding to meet the issues facing forest landowners in Mississippi. An example of this is the commission's role in organizing an effort involving the signing of multi-agency and -groups to a Memorandum of Agreement concerning a newly established statewide Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA). To that end, the commission has contributed to the support of a full time director of the CWMA. MFC personnel throughout the state are actively involved in weed management. This activity has been enhanced with a grant received in 2009 in excess of a \$1MM to aggressively treat invasive weed issues. In addition, partnerships have been developed for educational purposes such as one with the Mississippi Coastal Plains RC&D to implement an invasive species/habitat restoration education project. In addition, a statewide campaign on cogongrass awareness and identification has been developed by the MFC. Posters featuring "Wanted: Dead" along with 30 second radio spots have been distributed statewide. An informative article about cogongrass was included in a newspaper sent out by the Electric Power

Associations. This one newspaper has a distribution of 400,000 per issue. Other programs included "Cogongrass Not On My Farm!" Efforts are also being directed towards Kudzu and other invasive weed species as funds permit.

Surveys (ground and aerial) are conducted annually for traditional pests such as the Southern Pine Beetle. Numerous counties are surveyed each spring, using traps, to determine the potential level of SPB activity for the up coming year. This survey is part of a south wide SPB survey to document activity regionally. Aerial surveys are conducted each year covering the entire state. We hope that the survey this year and the years to come will continue to find the SPB activity at low to declining levels. During 2009, no SPB spots were detected. Surveys are also conducted for other potential threats such as the Sirex wood wasp and various exotic ambrosia beetles. These have been in association with the Early Detection Rapid Response programs carried out by various federal agencies.

Surveys are currently underway to determine the areas under attack by the redbay ambrosia beetle. This invasive species was discovered in June 2009, in Jackson County, MS near Gautier causing

mortality redbay. Mortality was also found near the Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge. As a result, the MFC partnered with Dr. John Riggins at Mississippi State University to conduct surveys in hopes of documenting the distribution and ecology of this invasive species.

The MFC has also taken an active preventive approach toward other nonnative invasive species. One example is the "Don't Move Firewood" campaign. This campaign specifically targets the movement of ash firewood the host of the Emerald Ash Borer that is causing severe mortality to ash in the northern states and is spreading south. The Emerald Ash Borer a serious potential threat to Mississippi forests.

Another major thrust of MFC Forest Health Program is the Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program that has been now on going for a few years in cooperation with the Extension Service at Mississippi State University. This program has an extensive education program associated with it including presentations to various groups concerning SPB biology, ecology and management to are my pines ready to be thinned as a preventive measure in the management of the insect.

Thousands of acres have been thinned in association with this program.

MFC personnel periodically received up dated training concerning forest health issues. This is enhanced by information provided in the form of publications on SPB Identification and Management for which 17,500 copies were distributed statewide.

Managing the Family Forest (<http://msucares.com/pubs/publications/p2470.pdf>) was published by the MSU Extension Service with funds provided by the Mississippi Forestry Commission and the United States Forest Service. Through this, the MFC hopes to provide forest health assistance throughout the state to all landowners needing assistance.