



Technical Bulletin

Forest Health
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Threats to Mississippi Forests

Losses in Mississippi forests can come from numerous sources. Insects and diseases are not the only sources. Losses can also come from wildfires, climatic events (hurricanes, tornadoes, and ice storms). These latter events can, in addition to their direct losses; cause stress to the residual stands making them more vulnerable and susceptible to attack by insects and pathogens.

Invasive plants, such as cogon grass, can spread into previously uninfected areas as a result of being distributed, into these new areas, on equipment that had been used to remove, salvage, timber in areas where the grass had been established. When this happens these newly invaded areas experience increased competition for water and nutrients and a decrease in biodiversity.

In recent years, a much broader view of forest health has emerged. No longer are insects and diseases the only agents of change that are of concern but all agents that impact the health of our forests. To that end, the US Forest Service has created the Eastern Forest Environmental Threats Assessment Center <http://www.forestthreats.org/>.

While the center has responsibilities for eastern forests as a whole many of the threats being investigated can directly impact the forests of Mississippi or has the potential of being a threat to our forests.

We are continually on the lookout for agents of change in the forests of Mississippi. Numerous agencies are participating in efforts to detect invasive species. Examples of this are the

trapping efforts to detect gypsy moth infestations that have been on going for years. In recent years, surveys for wood wasps, the emerald ash borer and exotic bark beetles have been conducted. Information concerning these invasive species can be found on the Mississippi Forestry Commission website under Forest Management/Forest Health as well as the website identified above.

The ash resource in Mississippi forests is considerable making this an invasive of concern. A common method of spread is in ash firewood, from infested areas, that individuals carry with them to their campsites.

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Image from USDA Forest Service



Image by J. R. Meeker, Florida Division of Forestry, Bugwood.org.



Emerald ash borer image from Bugwood.org