



TEXAS A&M
FOREST SERVICE

Southern Pine Beetle Prevention

Native Pest Threatens Pine Forests

Historically, the southern pine beetle (SPB) has been the most destructive pest facing commercial pine forests in East Texas and across the South.

The worst outbreak on record in Texas occurred in 1985. During that year, more than 15,000 infestations were reported.

The mortality was incredibly high. So many trees died, foresters estimated that roughly 5,000 houses could have been built with all the lumber.

Compounding the problem is the fact that most commercial pine forests in Texas belong to small, private landowners who seldom are equipped to deal with periodic bark beetle outbreaks.



TFS Response

- SPB infestations can be prevented through sound forestry practices including the thinning of dense pine stands to promote vigorous growth. Since 2003, TFS has offered technical assistance and federal cost shares to encourage private landowners to adopt SPB prevention practices.
- TFS entomologists have offered regional workshops and published frequent news articles to inform landowners about the SPB threat and the benefits of prevention.
- More than 100,000 acres of beetle-prone forests in Texas have received SPB prevention treatments (first thinning) since the program began.
- Loggers and private consulting foresters have benefited from the program through continued employment.

Economic Impact

- Despite depressed pulpwood markets, 1,600 landowners in 35 East Texas counties have received more than \$5.5 million in cost shares to promote timely first thinning of young pine forests.
- During peak infestation years, more than \$60 million worth of timber was lost annually.
- No infestations have occurred in East Texas since the program began.
- Once SPB returns, thinned stands are expected to have fewer infestations.
- Infestations that occur in thinned stands are much less likely to grow larger, compared to those in unthinned stands.
- Pulpwood removed and sold to local mills from the 100,000 treated acres is valued at \$16 million to the local economy.
- Participating landowners not only gain healthier pine stands, but also benefit from reduced fire hazards, improved wildlife habitat, increased growth rates and higher values when crop trees are harvested.