



# Forest Health *Notes*



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## Low Southern Pine Beetle Activity Predicted for Public and Private Forestlands in North Carolina in 2015

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**BACKGROUND.** Considered the most destructive forest pest in the South, the southern pine beetle (SPB) surpasses all other forest pests for the amount of damage it causes to pine forests. Periodic outbreaks occur on a regular basis over the majority of our state, although the last outbreak occurred in the early 2000s. The North Carolina Forest Service (NCFS) attempts to predict SPB population levels each spring through pheromone-baited insect traps. Trap data is included in a model developed by the Texas A&M Forest Service to provide early SPB population predictions with 75-85% accuracy. The model is based on the ratio of SPB to their primary predator, the clerid beetle, as well as other factors.

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In 2014, SPB activity was again low with no confirmed spots reported in the state. Meanwhile, *Ips* engraver beetles had a marked increase in activity, causing scattered damage statewide last year.

**This year, trapping data indicate another low year for populations of SPB in North Carolina as well as many southern states.** Exceptions, which are predicted to see a slight increase in SPB activity this summer, include:

Mississippi: Amite County, Bienville National Forest, Holly Springs Ranger District  
Alabama: Barbour County, Oakmulgee Ranger District  
Georgia: Glynn and Screven Counties

In recent years, SPB activity in the northeastern U.S. has increased and expanded into uncharted territory for the beetle. Last year, an SPB outbreak occurred on Long Island, NY for the first time in recorded history and this year, SPB activity was noticed for the first time in Connecticut. The 2015 trapping results predict increased SPB activity in Worcester County, Maryland.

### THANK YOU!

Every NCFS district in the state, plus Alligator River NWR, participated in trapping this year and the Forest Health Branch would like to extend our thanks!

## BY THE NUMBERS: SPB Prevention Program

- The cost-share program covers **50%** of a pre-commercial thinning operation, to reduce its susceptibility to SPB.
- Since its inception, over **65,700** acres have been managed through this program.
- Can be used in:
  - Young stands with **700+** trees per acre
  - Older stands with **120+** ft<sup>2</sup> basal area per acre
- As of June 2015, approximately **\$200,000** remains available.

Though low SPB populations are predicted, we need to continue to be on the lookout for localized and sporadic infestations, as they could occur anywhere in the state. Activity is most likely in pine stands that are overstocked, overmature or stagnant, or have poor soil drainage. Forests affected by littleleaf disease, annosus root rot, and other causes of tree stress may also be susceptible to SPB infestation.

The NCFS recommends the use of sound silvicultural practices to prevent SPB damage and encourages landowners to thin overcrowded pine stands. Proper stocking levels promote healthy stands that can better withstand attacks from SPB. The NCFS continues to provide Southern Pine Beetle Prevention Program (SPBPP) cost-share funds (funded through a grant from the USDA Forest Service) for pre-commercial thinning of pine stands. More information on the SPBPP cost-share is available on our website at [http://www.ncforestservice.gov/forest\\_health/fh\\_spbpp.htm](http://www.ncforestservice.gov/forest_health/fh_spbpp.htm).



*Aerial photo of a southern pine beetle outbreak, called a 'spot', taken in eastern Texas.  
Photo: USDA Forest Service, Region 8, Bugwood.org.*

This publication was published in Portable Document Format (PDF) to inform and educate NCFS personnel and other forestry interests about health issues affecting North Carolina forest resources.

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