



# News Release

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## **GEORGIA'S DROUGHT USHERS IN BEETLE OUTBREAK**

Georgia's ongoing drought has led to an unprecedented outbreak of destructive beetles that are killing pine trees. Aerial surveys by the Georgia Forestry Commission show active infestations of Ips engraver beetles in timber stands, primarily in north and central Georgia. The pest's spread elsewhere, however, can't be ruled.

"The lack of rain is causing long term damage to trees," said Georgia Forestry Commission Forest Health Coordinator Chip Bates. "We're seeing immediate damage in the form of dying tree tops, brown leaves and dropping needles. Without water, tree roots will suffer, and that's a perfect infestation scenario for the Ips beetle."

According to Bates, colder winter temperatures and more moisture customarily slow Ips engraver beetle populations. In the past few years, very few Ips beetle spots were found and they did not routinely pose the threat that's being seen this year. In January of 2017, surveys above Georgia's fall line confirmed more than 200 Ips infestations, on tracts of five to 180 acres in size. More than 3,700 smaller spots on a quarter acre or less were recorded in central Georgia.

"These beetles feast on stressed trees, damaged branches and logging debris," said Bates. "We're urging landowners to carefully survey their property now, and to contact a professional forester about specific forest management strategies to deal with this problem."

Bates said Ips beetles invade trees from the top down. The beetles release a destructive fungus, known as blue stain that impedes the flow of water and nutrients in the tree, which contributes to tree mortality.

"Time is required for tree stands to recover to a healthy and vigorous condition capable of withstanding natural and human-caused stress," said Bates. "There are certain forest management activities that can slow or speed up the spread of these pests, which is why we're urging landowners to contact a registered consulting forester (<http://gatrees.org/resources/directories/consulting->



[foresters/index.cfm](#)) or their local GFC forester. We're here to help mitigate any issue that might jeopardize Georgia's rich forest resource."

For more information about Ips engraver beetles and services of the Georgia Forestry Commission, visit [GaTrees.org](#).

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