



Southern Pine Beetle Outbreak 2017

GFC Forest Health Staff

Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) activity was concentrated in the northwest portion of the state in 2017. Activity started in early July with a concerned landowner and continued through August following aerial surveys. From May 19- September 7, GFC employees flew 13,300 miles of aerial surveys with visual observations on 15,500,000 acres (approximately 40% survey). From these surveys, 237 SPB spots were detected on approximately 325 acres. The majority of these spots (95%) were less than 5 acres in size, but did have active SPB during field checks.

The hotspot for 2017 was in northwest Georgia, mainly in Paulding, Bartow and Cherokee Counties. SPB spots here were on small private landowner tracts in unmanaged mixed pine-hardwoods stands. These areas are surrounded with development with little room to spread. In most cases, the landowners were notified, either in person or by letter, and told to monitor the spot to determine how fast it was spreading. Some small spots were also located on Army Corps of Engineer property around Lake Allatoona and a GA Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Management Area. Resources managers on these two properties are working on the spots in these locations.

Property in Paulding County that is owned by the City of Atlanta and managed by the Georgia Forestry Commission was the hardest hit. Most of these stands are over mature pine hardwood stands, with the hardwood having little merchantable value. In total, 25 spots were verified on these properties, resulting in 170 acres being clearcut and 300 acres being thinned. Work continues in this area to complete these harvests.

Other spots were scattered across the state, mostly in the coastal and southeastern parts of the state. Only one of these spots was larger than 5 acres. Local foresters visited these landowners with advice to harvest the spots or to keep watching the spot to determine if the spot was actively spreading.

