

# DELAWARE - 2010 FOREST HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS



## The Resource

Delaware's forests presently cover approximately 371,000 acres, roughly one third of the land area in the State. Delaware has experienced a rapid conversion of forests and agricultural lands to residential and other urban uses since the 1980s.

## Weather Conditions

Delaware experienced a cool wet spring in 2010, ideal for anthracnose disease. However, the summer months brought drought for the fourth year out of the last five. The summer drought will likely lead to continued expression of stress-related disease issues such as Hypoxylon canker of oaks in 2011.

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## Forest Pest Issues

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*gypsy moth larva*



### Gypsy Moth

In June 2010, aerial surveys did not find any significant defoliation due to gypsy moth. This finding marks the continuation of a downward trend in gypsy moth activity in the Great Cypress Swamp area of Sussex County, and the first year since 2006 in which no defoliation was observed. Three consecutive wet springs may have led to increased larval mortality caused by the parasitic fungus *Entomophaga*.



### Southern Pine Beetle (SPB)

An aerial survey of the entire southern portion of the State in June 2010 revealed no significant SPB hot spots. Delaware again participated in the Southwide Southern Pine Beetle Pheromone Study. Beetle counts from four pheromone-baited Lindgren funnel traps indicate the population is at a low or declining level. It is worth noting that Delaware had several extremely cold nights with temperatures around zero degrees Fahrenheit during both of the last two winters.

### Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

Ash represents only about 1% of Delaware's rural forests but is a significant component of the urban forest in some areas. In 2010, bio-surveillance was used to survey for EAB using colonies of the Buprestid-hunting wasp *Cerceris fumipennis*. Additionally, staff from the Delaware Forest Service assisted the Plant Industries Section by servicing 40 purple prism traps throughout the State. Visual surveys were also carried out at rest areas on Interstate 95 and on Route 1. EAB was not detected.



### Sirex Woodwasp (*Sirex noctilio*)

*Sirex noctilio* presents a threat to loblolly pine, the mainstay of the forest products industry in southern Delaware. In 2010, fourteen Lindgren traps baited with a *Sirex noctilio* blend were hung at seven sites. *Sirex* has yet to be detected in Delaware, although native Siricids were collected.



### Other Insects

In 2010, service foresters reported light to moderate damage from sawflies, bagworm moth, scale insects, eastern tent caterpillar, and fall webworm.

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## Disease Concerns

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### Hypoxylon Canker

#### (*Hypoxylon atropunctatum*)

Widespread mortality due to Hypoxylon canker was again seen throughout the State in 2010. This pathogen causes disease only in stressed trees. Several consecutive hot, dry summers predisposed trees to disease development, and the effects are still being seen. While many species were affected, oaks, especially southern red, white, and black, were most damaged. Service foresters again reported that this was the single most common damaging agent of oaks inspected during calendar year 2010.



**Other diseases** – Moderate damage and limited mortality were reported in 2010 from several rust diseases, fire blight, anthracnose, canker diseases, and Armillaria root rot.

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## Forest Health Monitoring

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### Deer Exclosures

Delaware's whitetailed deer herds benefit from near-ideal habitat and mild winters. As a result, deer populations have reached very high densities. Deer browsing has been documented as a factor affecting understory composition and ingrowth in hardwood forests. A study was initiated in 2005 to quantify the browse effect. Eighteen fenced exclosures have been installed in oak forests throughout Delaware. Measurements are taken at each exclosure and its accompanying control plot. Early results indicate significant differences between fenced and control plots, in as little as three years, in areas where deer density is greater than 50 per square mile.



### Bacterial Leaf Scorch (BLS)

Bacterial Leaf Scorch (BLS) has emerged as a serious threat to forest health in both urban and rural forests throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. Surveys in 2006 and 2007 found that BLS is common in red, pin, scarlet, and black oak throughout Delaware. Since little research has been carried out to assess the effects of BLS in traditional forests, permanent plots were established in 2008 at a study site at Blackbird State Forest in New Castle County.



Ninety red oaks in an affected woodlot were surveyed, tagged, and located with GPS equipment for a long-term study. Follow-up visits in 2009 and 2010, with accompanying ELISA lab work through the University of Delaware and the West Virginia Department of Agriculture. In 2010, a second study site was established at Taber State Forest in Kent County. In coming years, data from these two BLS research studies should begin to shed light on disease progression and the economic costs associated with BLS.

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