

The Mid-America Forest Bulletin

Spring 2004



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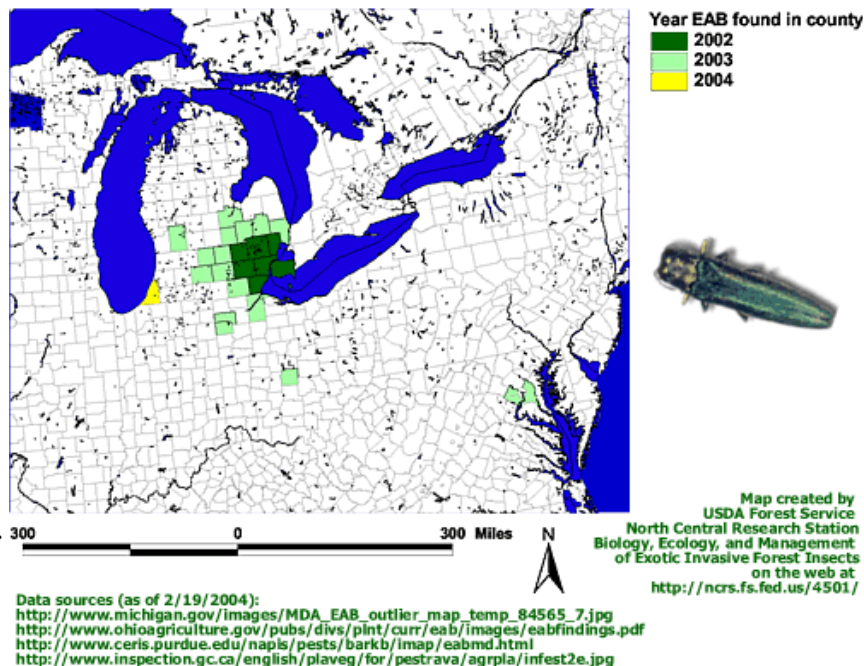
!!Forest Pest Alert!!

Though it is unknown how the insect exactly came into the country, it is believed that sometime in 1997 the emerald ash borer was delivered to Michigan from Asia in infested crating or pallets. It then spent five years establishing itself in the Detroit area. It went unnoticed in the area until May of 2002 because of ash yellow and ash decline, two common ash diseases that present themselves in similar manners.

Soon after discovery of the emerald ash borer's entrance into the U.S., a flurry of activity commenced to contain the infestation and to determine its full extent. It was soon found in five counties in Michigan and those areas where quarantined. At the same time, Canadian authorities also began looking for the pest in the Windsor area across the river from Detroit. They also found that the borer had entered their country as well. Since that May, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and the Canadian Forest Service have been locked in heated combat with the emerald ash borer with little success in fighting back the pest.

Now it is spring 2004. In the two years since the emerald ash borer was discovered, it has spread nearly 100 miles in all directions from Detroit. It has hop-scotched 100s of miles from the now 2000 square mile quarantine area into Virginia, Maryland, central and northeastern Ohio, and western Michigan. The long-range

Emerald Ash Borer in North America, 2004



spread of the pest is mainly from the apparent regular and routine violations of the quarantine by nurserymen in the quarantine area who are being hit hard by the embargo.

Currently authorities in all infected areas are using the only known method of control. That control is to cut down all ash trees within a half mile of an infected area, chipping and burning those trees within that area after cutting them down. This procedure is expensive for the state because it has to find, cut, and dispose of the infected ash trees, and doubly expensive for the landowners who are losing prize yard trees or thousands of boardfeet of timber.

Entomologists say that with or without human aid the emerald ash borer will most likely spread throughout

the range of all the major ash species. This is expected to cause major economic and environmental problems. This pest could effectively cause the end to ash production in the United States. Devastatingly, many handle companies may go out of business. In addition, the world famous Louisville Slugger may have to close its doors or leave the country in order to continue to produce bats since its bats have long been made from white ash.

Forest landowners across mid-America should be on the lookout for dying ash trees and contact state forestry officials for further investigation. With 11 billion boardfeet of ash in the region in danger, and \$69.9 billion at stake, mid-America's forestland owners can ill afford an unabated march through the forest.

For further information see the U.S. Forest Service website at www.fs.fed.us and to keep up with the current spread of the emerald ash borer, I suggest periodically searching the news at www.google.com. The *Mid-America Forest Bulletin* will continue to update the progress of the pest and measures being used to combat it.

FOREST MARKET

Ash Prices May Fall, While Pine Gets A Boost

Dr. Bill Hoover, noted forester at Purdue University, stated the ash prices could fall as landowners begin to flood the market in advance of the emerald ash borer. However, he could not pinpoint whether we would start to see this trend this summer or not.

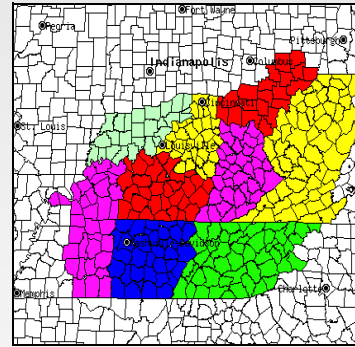
Meanwhile, pine prices hit a three-year high last quarter. However, it is still too early to tell if this is a blip on the screen or a start of real upward swing in prices. Nevertheless, after the long period depression that pine growers have felt in the South first due to slow housing start, then fears of a recession, and finally a trade dispute between Canada and the United States, any good news is welcome news.

Overall prices of

hardwoods continue to rise across the region. However, do not expect rises due to shortages of logs over the next few months as the National Weather Service is forecasting a near normal Spring for precipitation. Prices will still likely rise as feelings of recession have finally started to grow cold.

A noted increase in interest from foreign buyers will also help timber prices. Higher quality logs are being competed over heavily by foreign buyers. However, this trend may not last as it depends on the political climate not changing and federal bank policies remaining steady.

Four Winds Regional Timber Price Index



Bluegrass 231.67 up 3.62	VA/WV High Mts. 464.24
S. Central KY 554.11 up 7.50	up 6.23
Eastern KY 338.71 up 3.37	SE. Ohio 484.62 up 7.15
W. KY/W. Cent TN 426.3 up 4.21	S. Indiana 768.03 up 11.75
Cumberland Plateau 517.58 up 2.61	<i>These regional price indexes are designed to be used by the landowners to gauge how the prices are effecting the timber in their region. It should not be used to estimate the value of timber.</i>
Greater Smokies 507.82 up 9.01	

SPOTLIGHT SPECIES

White Ash



Fraxinus americana

White ash is the most common and useful native ash. It grows best in rich, moist well-drained soils. Because white ash is tough, strong, and highly resistant to shock, it is particularly sought for handles, oars, and baseball

bats.

White ash grows naturally from Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, to northern Florida in the east, and to eastern Minnesota south to eastern Texas as the western edge of its range.

White ash has demanding soil fertility and soil moisture requirements. White ash grows most commonly on fertile soils with a high nitrogen content and a moderate to high calcium content. Soil moisture is an

important factor affecting local distribution. White ash grows from near sea level to near the ridgetops in the Cumberland Mountains.

White ash is a pioneer species that establishes itself on fertile abandoned fields in several parts of the

country. When young, white ashes are shade tolerant. Seedling can survive under the canopy with less than 3% of full sunlight but grow little. White ash becomes more intolerant with age.

White ash can be maintained more easily in a dense stand than can some of its more shade intolerant species. In contrast, dominate or co-dominate species white ash responds readily to thinning and within a few years will increase its crown area to take full advantage of any reasonable release.

Ash decline is the most serious problem affecting white ash. Air pollution and ozone can also severely injury white ash. White ash seedlings are easily damaged or destroyed by deer and cattle browsing. Rabbits, beaver, and porcupines occasionally use the bark of young trees for food.

One of the earliest reported uses of white ash was as snakebite preventive. Ash leaves in the hunter's pocket or boots were "proved" to be offensive to rattlesnakes and thereby provided protection from them. Seeds of the white ash are eaten by a number of birds and squirrels.

The Wolverines Return to Michigan?

Biologists have confirmed the sighting of a real Michigan wolverine; about 200 years after the species was last seen in the state that uses the small but ferocious animal as its unofficial nickname.

Coyote hunters spotted a wolverine near Ubly, about 90 miles north of Detroit. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist Arnie Karr saw the forest predator Tuesday and snapped pictures of the animal as it ran out of the woods and across a field.

The wolverine, a member of the weasel family that grows to about 25 pounds but is ferocious enough to fight off bears and wolves, once ranged across the northern and western United States. It is now limited mostly to northern Canada, Idaho and Alaska, with sightings in a few other states, but its last confirmed sightings in Michigan were by fur traders in the late 1700s and early 1800s.

"The appearance is up there with having a caribou or a polar bear turn up,"



Department of Natural Resources spokesperson Brad Wurfel said Wednesday. "It's unprecedented."

How the scrappy animal returned and even whether it ever really left are mysteries in the state, where the best-known Wolverines are athletes at the University of Michigan.

Raymond Rustem, supervisor of

the natural heritage unit in the department's wildlife division, said the wolverine could have traveled to the state, been released, or escaped from captivity.

"What it means, who knows?" Rustem said. "When you take a look at the wolverine, there's always been this debate about whether wolverines ever were a part of Michigan's recent past. Some evidence shows that, some say no."

The wolverine was on Michigan's endangered species list until the late 1990s, when it was removed because it was not expected to return, Rustem said. Conservationists asked the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to put the animal on its endangered list in 2000, but the agency in October declined to study whether the species should be added.

REGIONAL HEADLINES

KENTUCKY

Availability of Federal Fiscal Year 2004 FLEP funding is in jeopardy, thanks to the severe wildfires in the western US the past two years. In an effort to secure some funding for some landowners in Kentucky, the KY Division of Forestry has submitted a proposal to the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy that would make tobacco settlement funds available for cost-share assistance. Eligible landowners would include those whose income was effected by the reduction in the tobacco quotas.

OHIO

Ohio's effort to wipe out gypsy moths enters the northwest part of the state for the first time with the aerial spread organic compound designed to change the insect's behavior and thwart their reproduction. The "slow the spread" program aimed at eradicating isolated populations in Allen, Putnam, Paulding, and Hardin counties entails using pheromone flakes. Forty-three of Ohio's eighty-eight counties have established gypsy moth populations.

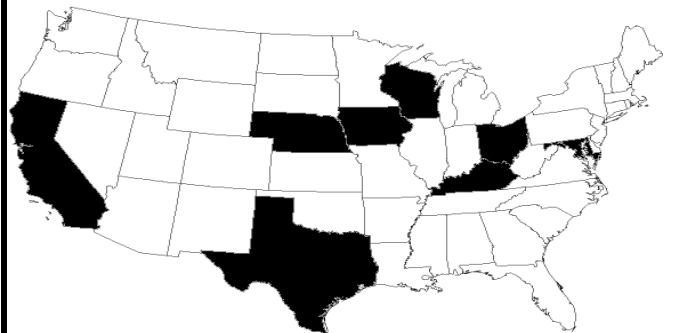
TENNESSEE

Governor Phil Bredesen has OKed the purchase of 100 fire plows with transports to replace the Division of Forestry's aging fleet. At this point, the legislature appears to support the purchase. The purchase will be paid for by the sale of a \$20 million bond.

VIRGINIA

Stuart Leve, a landscape designer in Milford, MI, was fined \$12,300, placed on two year probation, and sentenced to 200 hours community service for shipping 121 ash trees to a

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W. Va Plan to Protect Chesapeake Bay

Chesapeake Bay has had a long history of environmental problems. Fish kills, loss of muscle beds, and bird habitat all warned of an environmental disaster. Because of this, many have been working to clean it up.

Cities near the bay have long been a concern of the environmental community and been the focus of its efforts to clean up the bay. However, now the focus seems to be inland.

West Virginia is participating in a 7-state effort to clean up the bay. The states involved have pledged to reduce the amount of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediments that flow into the bay. W. Va. participation in this is due to the head waters of the Potomac River which originate in the state and eventually

flow into the bay.

A 43-page study of W. Va. contributions to the problems of the bay has been developed, with focuses on problems in each of the effected counties. The study notes that in Morgan, Berkley, and Jefferson counties waste water, storm water, population growth, and economic development are the contributors to the problems of the bay. However, in the majority of the counties the blame has been placed on logging and farming. This has upset many of the states farmers and loggers.

"What it comes down to it there are a lot of farmers who are upset with the way the (pollution) model has been setup," says Buddy Davisions, spokespersons for WV Dept of Agriculture.

Farmers and loggers have been working for many years to improve farming and logging practices in the state of WV in order to cut down on emissions and they are upset that the bar for improvement keeps moving.

"Agriculture is a pretty easy target," said Davision, "You drive along and you see a farm and, well there must be pollution." Referring to the often less than eye appealing nature of high production farming.

Implementation of the study's programs require money, which is something that lawmakers are unlikely to give in the current fiscal climate.

The report will be finalized after March 29 comment period ends.

KWOA Fights For Fair Taxation in KY

Kentucky Woodland Owners Association headed to Frankfort in support of legislation developed by the organization to correct a system, which put unfairly high taxes on Kentucky's forestland.

Jim Corum, 1983 Kentucky Tree Farm of the Year, discovered that there was a problem with the tax rate when in 1999 the taxes on his 1000 acre tree farm in Harlan County, Kentucky went from \$325 to \$2000. This tax hike occurred because the state Revenue Cabinet rewrote the book on property taxation in Kentucky. When doing so, they decided that the rate tax to forestland should be half of that taxed to pasture land.

While this new tax base sounded good to the people who wrote the new tax code, unfortunately it was not based in sound forest economics. The new rate of taxes makes any forest improvement activities too expensive for the forestland owner to undertake. For Jim Corum, who had been working actively on forest management since 1978, this was the straw that broke the camel's back.



Corum, an active member of Kentucky Woodland Owners Association, then broke the news to the other members that started the now four-year quest for the organization to get the problem corrected.

In the past four years a team of KWOA members have been meeting with state officials and learning the ins and outs of how state government works. First, they meet with Revenue Cabinet officials, who they found uncooperative, who then referred them the state Property Valuation Administration. PVA tried very hard to show the member

that they felt the new tax code had done them a favor. This cycle went around and around until members in 2002 got passed a House Resolution in the Kentucky State General Assembly to study the situation.

The conclusion of the study was that yes, forest taxes in Kentucky were unfairly high for those who were practicing active forest management. However, with this revelation came more stonewalling by state government.

With this new assurance that the taxes for forestland in where to high, they went again to the General Assembly with a bill that would start the much needed work to overhaul the forest tax code and work at creating a special tax designation call "classified forest" which would further reduce taxes on forestland that are being actively managed.

With the General Assembly nearly over and political infighting at a new all time high, is unlikely the KWOA proposal will even get out of committee this session. Members vow to press the issue until the bill is passed and forest tax reform begins.

Farmers, Are You Giving Up Money? Threat of Catastrophic Fires Seen as a Possibility in KY

Farmers would not let weeds take their soybean. So why are so many letting their woods grow wild? Timber is a crop, too. It is no different from corn or livestock, only it takes much longer to bring it to market. Many farmers think that woodlands are only a place to hunt, a place for wildlife to roam, or just nice to look at from the porch. Regardless of why they own woodlands, they can make money from it too. However, if they are not being managed, they are giving up their opportunity to make that money.

From the Great Lakes to the Smoky Mountains, from the mighty Mississippi River to the wide Atlantic Ocean mid-America is not just crops and not just forest, it is often a combination of both. Only less than 1% of those farmers have any sort of forest management going on in their woodlands. Consequently, elms are growing where walnuts and cherry could thrive. Cows are roaming through woodland and stamping out the farmers' timber profits. Veneer trees are being burned as firewood.

Getting started on the way to more enjoyable and profitable woodlands is simple. Contact the local forestry office or a consulting forester. In many areas, these foresters can offer free forest management plans that can tell you what your woodlands are like now and can guide you to that more pleasurable and profitable future.

If you know that your woodland has valuable trees in them, do not be lulled into selling to the local logger or mill. In addition, do not think that you have to cut nearly every tree in order to make a buck. Hire a consulting forester. Consulting foresters are different from your local forestry office forester because they work for you and often have a vast experience with making sure that landowners get the most bang for their buck. That often does not mean that every tree has to be logged. Why sell the whole herd of cows when only a few are ready for market. Consulting foresters are often paid based on the performance of a sale, so they work hard to see that you get the best price for your timber. In addition, many studies suggest that the consultant fees are more than made up by the higher price gained through his work.

Farmers, do not let your forest fields be taken by weeds or be lulled into selling the whole forest herd when there are so many are not prime for market. Get on the path to good farming sense and get someone who knows the market and knows the crop to help you grow your timber. Then, watch wildlife roam and the dollars grow as part of your overall farm operation.

Some blessings can get out of hand. And that is what Kentucky is beginning to realize as several seasons of little or no fire are starting to have an ill effect.

A year and half of unburned leaf litter, major ice storm damage from the 2002 storm on the northeastern sections of the state, and southern pine beetle devastated stands up and down the Daniel Boone forest region of Kentucky, have left many areas of the state with high levels of fuel loads in the forest. Forest fuel load is the amount of leaf litter, limbs, and other debris that can burn in the forest if given the chance to burn.

This is compounded by fewer state firefighting resources because state administrators have cut funding for forest firefighting to its lowest level in years. This is putting additional stress on local volunteer fire departments, who do not have the proper equipment to battle large forest fires.

Kentucky Division of Forestry reports that since January 1 of this year the state has responded to 638 forest fires that have burned 12,393 acres. This is up from the last two years, but near normal overall. However, frequent small rains have been very helpful. On February 29 of this year, state forestry had its busiest single day since 1987 responding to 151 fires. Luckily, it rained the next day.

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For questions, advertising, or future information feel free to contact us at (859) 583-1085 or by email at midamerianbulliten@hotmail.com.

The Mid-American Forest Bulletin is a quarterly publication. That focuses on forestry news from Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, Tennessee, West Virginia, Virginia, and Tennessee. As well as providing educational information to forest landowners of the region.

Contributors are welcome.

REGIONAL HEADLINES (CONT.)

Maryland nursery. These trees were then planted in Virginia, in violation of the Emerald Ash Borer quarantine. This was in addition to the \$60,000 he had already paid in damages to the nursery where the infested stock was shipped. Leve's 200 hours of community service will be spent helping local agencies remove infested trees in Michigan.

INDIANA

Ron Whitaker, a northern Indiana logger, was arrested on charges that he exceeded the number of trees he was supposed to cut down under contract and illegally cut trees on a neighboring property. The State Division of Forestry is withholding Whitaker's 2004 Timber Buyers License because of the complaints. State DNR says the charges against Whitaker allege that he has been a nuisance to residents in Northern Indiana and Southern Michigan.

WEST VIRGINIA

The 2002 massive ice storm that hit parts of West Virginia is still causing problems for forestry officials as they begin the fire season with abnormally high forest fire fuel loads in those areas. Outdoor burning is banned in the state between the hours of 7 a.m. and 4 p.m. until May 31.

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