The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) participates annually in the southern pine beetle (SPB) trapping program, which enables foresters to predict seasonal SPB population levels. This insect has the potential to cause more forest destruction in the southeastern states than all other forest pests combined, so anticipating potential damage is important. Insect traps are deployed in early spring by GFC foresters and are checked weekly for at least four weeks. A model developed by Dr. Ronald Billings (Texas Forest Service) is used to predict population levels. The model is based on the number of southern pine beetles and clerid beetles, a predator of the southern pine beetle, captured during the trapping period. The history of the trapping program over the past 20 years indicates this model is more than 75 percent accurate.

In the most recent survey, a total of 48 traps were placed statewide. All of the traps indicated low SPB populations/activity (See 2015 Southern Pine Beetle Predictions Map) http://www.gfc.state.ga.us/forest-management/forest-health/pine-bark-beetles/2015%20Southern%20Pine%20Beetle%20Prediction.pdf. Based on the trapping data alone, GFC does not expect to see significant SPB activity in the state this year.

Special thanks to GFC foresters and technicians for assisting with this year’s trapping program. Thanks also to the U.S. Forest Service and Department of Defense for providing trap data. Additional information on trapping and historical SPB survey data is posted at: http://www.gatrees.org/forest-management/forest-health/pine-bark-beetles/

The GFC will be conducting an annual aerial survey for pine bark beetles June through September. Any activity will be marked, and the landowner will be notified. A summary report will be posted at: http://www.gatrees.org/forest-management/forest-health/pine-bark-beetles/

The SPB Hazard Rating Map for Georgia can be found at: http://www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth/technology/nidrm_spb.shtml. This map was developed by the U.S.D.A. Forest Service based upon variables such as host species, stand density, site and soil characteristics. It gives an overview of risk for SPB attack and damage, and provides a good snapshot of where future problems may occur when stand, site, and weather variables trigger another outbreak.
Southern pine beetle is the most destructive forest pest in the Southern United States.
The most recent outbreak of the insect (1999-2003) caused over $1.5 billion in damages across eight states. Changes in forests from tree death caused by the bark beetles can impact water supplies from forested watersheds as well as wildlife habitat.

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