

Forest pests and pathogens

There are many forest pests and pathogens that currently pose a threat to the Cherokee National Forest, such as gypsy moth and hemlock woolly adelgid. There are an even greater number of pests and pathogens that are likely to impact the Cherokee within the next 20 years such as emerald ash borer, thousand canker disease, Dutch elm disease and others yet to be discovered. Because our modeling focused on estimating the natural range of variability, and these non-native pests and pathogens are novel to the Southern Blue Ridge and predictions of their effects are imprecise, they are not considered as part of the disturbances in the models used for this process. Excluding these does not reflect a bias or lack of concern among the Steering Committee, only the limitations of the tools available to us. In fact, the Steering Committee expressed concern about all of these pests and pathogens. Some specific concerns and unanswered questions include the unknown type and arrangement of early successional habitat created by dead and dying trees, the need to provide funding for very costly treatments to protect our trees at a landscape scale, and even the difficulties of monitoring the spread of these pests. Each pest or pathogen could merit the time and attention of a planning effort devoted solely to it. In lieu of that level of detail, the Steering Committee offers the following recommendations.

- 1) Implement an early detection and rapid response framework for surveillance, monitoring, and treatment of invasive species. The Steering Committee encourages the Forest Service to adopt this method whenever possible and to engage adjacent landowners to help in this effort (this process provided a list of adjacent landowners that can now be used to contact them via mail).
- 2) Fully implement the plan and approved EAs for treatment of hemlock woolly adelgid and for the control of non-native invasives. This will require more funding than is currently available.
- 3) Continue monitoring efforts for emerald ash borer, thousand canker disease, and other pests and pathogens.
- 4) Continue spot treatments for gypsy moth and prioritize the recommendations in this document that address thinning closed canopy oak systems.
- 5) The Forest Service should continue to participate in the “Don’t move Firewood” campaign and consider posting signs and/or providing information to visitors instructing them not to move firewood and the reasons why they should not.
- 6) Similar to the “Don’t move Firewood” campaign, the Committee encourages the Forest Service to educate visitors about the potential negative impacts of moving bait (minnows, crayfish, and worms).
- 7) Continue to implement an equipment sanitation program to limit the movement of invasive species among sites within Cherokee NF and the surrounding region by Forest Service vehicles, logging equipment, and Forest Service and contractor personnel.