

Kentucky Forest Health Task Force

Since its establishment in early 2004, the Kentucky Forest Health Task Force has worked to establish itself as an information clearinghouse for issues impacting forest health in Kentucky. Informational meetings, newsletter articles, and a web site have helped further our goals. The task force is working with federal, state, and local officials, as well as stakeholders and universities, to facilitate coordination, cooperation, and education.

The mission of the Kentucky Forest Health Task Force is to identify and prioritize threats of insects, plant pathogens, invasive plant species, and environmental factors to the integrity of Kentucky's forest resources, and recommend sound and timely approaches to addressing them.

The wood and wood products industry in Kentucky generates approximately \$7.1 billion annually yet remains grossly underutilized. Our natural resources have tremendous potential for growth with respect to recreation, tourism, wildlife management, aesthetics, energy production, and timber production. The Kentucky Forest Health Task Force is seeking ways in which to develop this potential.

Declining forest health resulting from insects, plant pathogens, and invasive plant species is a serious threat to the sustainability of Kentucky's forests. For example, the southern pine beetle outbreak of 1999-2002 had a dramatic impact on the pine forests of Kentucky, including:

- stand altering mortality to nearly 100% of the pine type in Kentucky,
- economic losses exceeding \$120 million,
- elimination of habitat for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, and
- immeasurable aesthetic losses.

The Kentucky Forest Health Task Force hopes to facilitate coordination, raise awareness, and serve as an advocate for matters related to forest health, including:

- exotic species detection and management,
- forest sustainability, and
- resource utilization.

Members of the Kentucky Forest Health Task Force

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Pending threats from invasive exotic species are a constant concern. Sudden oak death, the gypsy moth, hemlock woolly adelgid, and the emerald ash borer all have potential for dramatic impacts in Kentucky. The Kentucky Forest Health Task Force is working to facilitate coordination among state and federal agencies monitoring exotic introductions to minimize their impact.

The sustainability of Kentucky's forests is threatened by varying management philosophies, forest utilization practices, and invasive species introductions. Research on the ecology and management of regeneration and sustainability of oak-dominated deciduous forests and southern pine beetle-impacted conifer forests is ongoing. The Kentucky Forest Health Task Force is working to facilitate coordination among researchers and managers to focus efforts on furthering forest sustainability.

It is the Kentucky Forest Health Task Force's belief that we can work better together to address these forest health issues impacting Kentucky's natural resources. Coordination among state and federal agencies, private landowners, and interest groups along with our universities can lead to more timely and effective measures to meet these challenges. Please support this effort.

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Forest entomologist at the University of Kentucky. Her research program examines interactions among forest arthropods and forest regeneration, restoration, and sustainability and includes studies on the effects of invasive species on the health of Kentucky's forests.

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