



February 1, 2016

**Southern Group of State Foresters Statement of Support for the
Gypsy Moth Slow-the-Spread Program**

Prepared and Reviewed by SGSF Forest Health and Forest Management Committees

The Southern Group of State Foresters strongly supports the continued full implementation of the Gypsy Moth Slow-the-Spread Program (STS). STS is frequently cited as the most biologically effective and economically justified program supported by the US Forest Service's Forest Health Protection Program. The annual investment of 8-9 million dollars funds intensive survey of recently established populations along the expanding front and treatment of detected colonies totaling 450,000 acres per year. This program reduces spread of the gypsy moth into uninfested areas by more than 60% when averaged along the entire front. However, spread is variable in different regions and the Southern region has enjoyed a spread reduction of more than 80%.

More than 70% of the susceptible hardwood forests in the United States are not yet infested and the majority of those highly susceptible forests are located in the South. Of particular concern is the oak resource, which is not only economically important in hardwood-rich regions like the Southern Appalachian and Ozark Mountains, but also of profound ecological importance for its role in sustaining wildlife populations and biodiversity. Many maturing oak forests are already vulnerable to oak decline, and gypsy moth has exacerbated this decline in many areas where it has become endemic.

STS has prevented infestation of more than 130 million acres during its 15 years of existence. If STS had never been implemented, the majority of North Carolina would be infested, and the gypsy moth would be invading the eastern portions of Kentucky and Tennessee. However, based on STS's success, none of North Carolina, Tennessee or Kentucky is infested. These are truly remarkable achievements that have significantly delayed the impacts to the South's urban and wildland hardwood forests, as well as delaying the costs associated with those impacts.

Conservative analyses estimate that STS yields a benefit-to-cost ratio of 3 to 1 by delaying the onset of impacts and costs that occur as gypsy moth invades new areas (Sills, 2008). Costs and impacts associated with gypsy moth infestation include treatment costs borne by states and/or landowners, tree decline and/or mortality, reduced forestland productivity, reductions in property values, negative impacts to watersheds, human health impacts (allergic reactions in sensitive individuals that come in contact with the caterpillars), and costs and inefficiencies associated with gypsy moth quarantines on intra- and inter-state commerce.

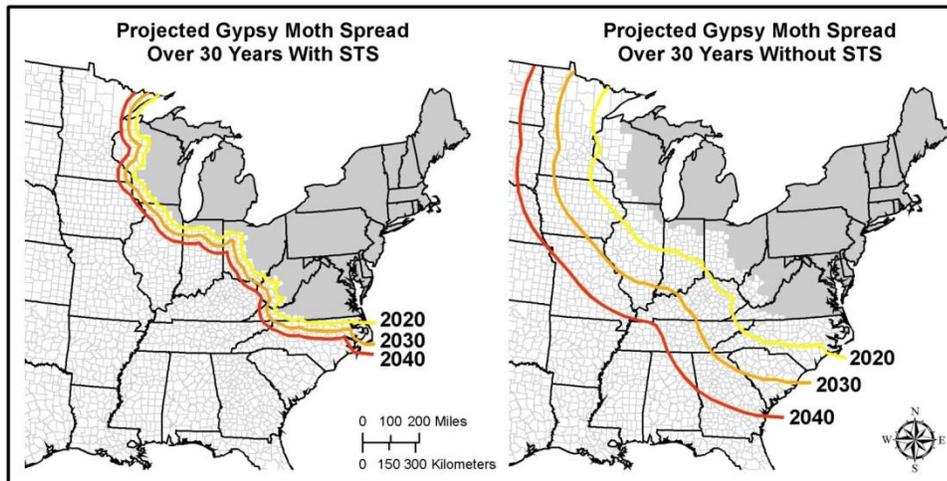
If STS is discontinued or significantly reduced, gypsy moth will infest over half of the susceptible forests in the South within 25 years. If STS continues to be fully implemented, less than 20% of the susceptible forests in the South will be infested during that same time frame. As proud stewards of the South's amazing forest resources, we find these facts to be convincing and compelling. In the interests of the ecological and economic health of the South, we firmly endorse the continued full implementation of STS.

Please see the attached STS Briefing Paper and the National Plant Board's Policy Statement regarding "Continued Agency Support for the Gypsy Moth Program".

Sills, Erin. 2008. [Assessment of the Economic Feasibility of the Gypsy Moth Slow the Spread Project](#). *Final Report to USDA Forest Service State & Private Forestry Grant #NC-06-DG-11244225-337*. 72 pp.

The Gypsy Moth Slow the Spread Foundation establishes a formal framework for cooperation among the ten states (listed at the bottom of page) who work with each other and the USDA to slow the spread of gypsy moth. Together they have achieved their goal of reducing spread of this destructive pest by more than 60%, which has prevented infestation of more than 130 million acres in 15 years.

- **The Threat:** Gypsy moth is a destructive, exotic forest pest that feeds on over 300 species of trees. It was accidentally introduced into the United States in 1869 and is currently established throughout the northeast and parts of the upper mid-west (gray shaded area on maps), where it has defoliated 80 million acres since 1970. It feeds on over 300 species of trees but oaks are most preferred. Defoliation causes growth loss, branch dieback and tree mortality. Additionally it reduces property values, adversely affects commerce and causes allergic reactions in sensitive individuals

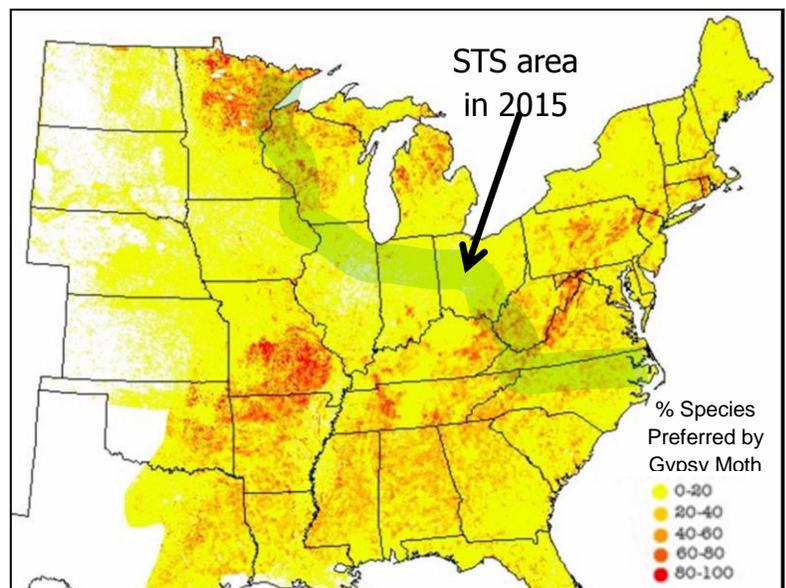


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The Benefits of STS: More than 70% of the susceptible hardwood forests in the United States are not yet infested and the majority of those highly susceptible forests are located in the south (darker shaded area on map below). The benefits include:

- Delays infestation of these extensive urban and wild land hardwood forests in the south.
- Yields a benefit to cost ratio of 3 to 1 by delaying the onset of impacts that occur as gypsy moth invades new areas. A conservative 20-year net present value after subtracting costs is 184 million dollars.
- Delays impacts associated with gypsy moth quarantines on intra- and inter-state commerce.
- Protects the environment through use of gypsy moth specific treatments.
- Promotes a coordinated, region-wide action based on biological need.



Continued Agency Support for the Gypsy Moth Program

Contact: Michael E. Cooper, President

Policy Issuance Date: July 26, 2012

Background and Status

The gypsy moth is a critical plant pest for NPB-member states geographically located in the Southern, Central and Western regions of the country. The gypsy moth was originally detected in the Northeast in 1869. With cooperative programs administered through state and federal agencies, the spread of this pest has been limited to this point. However, with a lessened priority and a declining funding base, it is expected that gypsy moth populations have the potential to dramatically increase and to affect new areas of the country.

The gypsy moth affects more than 300 species of trees and shrubs. Since 1970, more than 78 million acres have been defoliated by the gypsy moth, including over 1.3 million acres in each of the last three years. Routinely, gypsy moth defoliation causes tree mortality, reduces property values, adversely affects commerce, and creates health problems for sensitive individuals who may come in contact with the caterpillars.

The invasion of the gypsy moth frequently occurs in three stages including arrival, establishment, and spread of the pest. Once fully established, preventing local spread of the pest is often difficult and leads to

additional short-distance dispersal, along with long-range spread. As populations persist, these isolated populations coalesce and the general spread of the pest is dramatically accelerated.

It should be noted that approximately 70% of our most susceptible U.S. forests have never been infested by the gypsy moth and as such remain at great risk for introduction and establishment. Fortunately, the operational and management options for this pest are well-established, offering the opportunity to not

only detect the pest early, but also the ability to fully respond, even in the most environmentally-sensitive areas. These options provide response agencies with greater latitude in regards to addressing this pest at an early stage and thus capturing tremendous financial benefits for affected producers and industries.

National Plant Board-Policy Directives

The NPB supports a sustained gypsy moth program that focuses on Slow The Spread at the leading edge, Early Detection Rapid Response in uninfested areas of the country, and regulatory compliance. NPB further supports a commitment to formulating short and long-term strategic plans that provide continued staffing and financial resources.