

Forest Health Information Brief

Oak Wilt in the Northeast

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry



Description: Oak wilt is the most serious disease of oaks in the Eastern United States. Millions of trees have died in an area from Pennsylvania to Minnesota and south to Texas and South Carolina since the 1950s. The disease is worsening as people move into oak-dominated woodlands and as high-value forests become infected. Tree wounds caused by careless logging and uninformed landowners and forest users provide an entry point for the disease.

Many infected sites involve multiple ownerships and span large areas, making it difficult to control oak wilt. Preventing new oak wilt outbreaks and controlling the spread of existing outbreaks is critical and requires coordination among key partners and landowners. The highest priority is to eradicate outlier infections and those in important recreation areas.

Key Issues:

- Reduce the number of new infection sites by reducing the number of tree wounds.
- Limit the number of new infection sites by reducing the number of potential spore-producing trees.
- Prevent the expansion of infection centers by keeping diseased roots from infecting more trees.

Accomplishments:

- Revised and distributed the popular publication, *How to Identify, Prevent, and Control Oak Wilt*.
- Developed new root control techniques (stump extraction) to complement existing methods.
- Reduced the number of oaks in high-value forests on the Chequamegon/Nicolet National Forest.
- Eradicated the disease in high-value recreation areas on the Huron/Manistee National Forest.
- Eradicated the disease in New York.

Budget History:

Oak Wilt Suppression <i>(dollars in thousands)</i>				
	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012
Federal Lands	\$84	\$39	\$49	TBD
States	50	50	67	TBD
Totals	\$134	\$89	\$116	TBD

Future Direction

- Document the disease's impact on the Northeastern States and on oak-dominated ecosystems.
- Treat new oak wilt infection centers.
- Help States develop effective education programs to limit new infection centers.
- Evaluate the results of treatment projects and the objectives of oak wilt suppression programs.
- Develop ways to address regional oak wilt mortality before it becomes an insurmountable problem

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