

The Southern Pine Beetle:

Cost sharing pine thinning operations for southern pine beetle prevention in North Mississippi



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Introduction

The southern pine beetle (*Dendroctonus frontalis* Zimm.) (SPB) has been killing pine trees in Mississippi for hundreds, if not thousands of years. Many landowners have suffered losses and some have lost entire stands. Such wide spread damage gets the public attention in a way that few other forestry issues can. Proactive management activities such as periodic thinnings can increase overall forest health and reduce the threat of an SPB outbreak.

With this in mind, the Mississippi Forestry Commission, in conjunction with the US Forest Service Southern Region-Forest Health Protection and Mississippi State University (MSU) Extension Forestry, has initiated an SPB prevention program with the goal that the recommended thinning practices will reduce the threat and impacts of an SPB outbreak in Mississippi.

Cost shares available for SPB prevention

Federal cost share funds for SPB prevention are available for first commercial and pre-commercial thinnings statewide beginning in January 2010. These funds are provided by

the American Restoration and Recovery Act (ARRA) and the USDA Forest Service, Forest Health Protection and are administered by the Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC). MSU Extension Forestry and forest entomology are collaborators on this project. The availability of cost shares in future years is contingent upon continued funding of the SPB prevention project by the USDA Forest Service.

Cost shares for pre-commercial thinning

To qualify for federal cost shares, a stand to be pre-commercially thinned must:

- ❖ be between 4-12 years of age;
- ❖ have a stand density greater than 700 pine stems per acre;
- ❖ be between 10 and 5,000 contiguous acres;
- ❖ contain no merchantable trees;
- ❖ be composed of 70 percent loblolly pine, shortleaf pine, or slash pine;
- ❖ be located in Mississippi;
- ❖ rank as moderate or high hazard for the SPB;
- ❖ follow the guidelines specified in the landowner's forest stewardship management plan. This plan will be developed free of charge by MSU Extension Forestry personnel as part of the program.

Federal cost shares provide a flat payment of \$75 per acre. For federal reporting requirements, the landowner needs to provide evidence of expenses for the pre-com-



mercial thinning as well as any consulting forester fees.

Cost shares for first thinning of merchantable pulpwood stands

To qualify for federal cost shares, merchantable pine pulpwood stands must:

- ❖ be located in Mississippi;
- ❖ be between 10 and 5,000 acres;
- ❖ be composed of at least 70 percent loblolly, shortleaf pine, or slash pines;
- ❖ rank as moderate or high hazard for the SPB;
- ❖ follow the guidelines specified in the landowner's forest stewardship management plan. This plan will be developed free of charge by MSU Extension Forestry personnel as part of the program.

The cost share for the first thinning of pulpwood stands consists of a flat payment of \$50 per acre. Thinnings are to be conducted according to the forest stewardship management plan developed for the stand. For federal reporting requirements, the landowner needs to provide copies of load tickets to verify the tonnage removed as well as consulting forester fees.

Cost shares for loggers

Funds provided by the ARRA have made it possible for us to offer a cost share payment to loggers working with the landowners already enrolled in the program. The logger cost share for the first thinning of pulpwood stands consists of a flat payment of \$50 per acre. To qualify for federal cost shares, the logger must:

- ❖ be current in the logger education training program conducted by MSU;
- ❖ be working with a landowner already enrolled in the cost share program.

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Cost shares for foresters

Funds provided by ARRA have made it possible for us to offer a cost share payment to foresters writing forest stewardship management plans for private landowners in Mississippi. These management plans must be written for stands that are moderate to high hazard for SPB outbreak, and include activities that reduce the threat of such an outbreak. The forester cost share for management plan writing is a flat \$2.50 per acre. To qualify for federal cost shares, the forester must:

- ❖ be a registered forester in the state of Mississippi;
- ❖ be a trained tree farm inspector.



Procedures for applying for the cost share program

1. The landowner and logger will sign up for the program with a representative of MSU Extension Forestry. This representative will inspect the stand being enrolled prior to operations to ensure that it meets the qualifications listed above. Once enrolled in the program, the landowner has nine months to thin the stand. *For the logger and forester to receive the cost share payment, all harvesting and paperwork needs to be completed by August 31, 2011.*

2. The cost share application forms must be signed by the landowner, logger, and MSU-Extension Forestry representative.

3. A description of the stand (with legal description and maps) and a forest stewardship management plan must be submitted to the MFC. The plan will be developed free of charge by MSU Extension Forestry.

4. Following treatment, the MSU Extension Forestry representative will visit the stand to verify that the thinning has been carried out according to the management plan. In addition, documentation of actual costs (pre-commercial thinning), or tons of pulpwood removed (first thinning of pulpwood stands) must be provided. These are required for federal reporting purposes.

All Mississippi forestry best management practices (BMPs) are to be followed. The MFC will review the claim and, upon approval, will issue a reimbursement check to the landowner and logger.

Restrictions:

Participation in the SPB cost share program is subject to the following restrictions:

- ❖ participating landowners, partnerships, or trusts, must own between 10 and 5,000 acres;
- ❖ cost shares are only available for first thinning of stands that contain at least 70 percent loblolly pine, short leaf pine, or slash pine and are classified as being of moderate to high hazard for SPB prevention;

- ❖ stands must be located in Mississippi;
- ❖ cost share thinning operations must reduce stand basal area to a maximum of 75 sq. ft. per acre;
- ❖ all Mississippi BMP guidelines are to be followed;
- ❖ an approved forest stewardship management plan must be produced or be in place;
- ❖ once the application has been approved, the landowner and logger have nine months to complete the thinning;
- ❖ total cost shares must not exceed \$8,500/landowner or \$17,000 for a partnership or trust with two or more members per federal fiscal year (October 1-September 30);
- ❖ total cost shares must not exceed \$8,500 per logging firm;
- ❖ for pulpwood stands, a minimum of five tons per acre must be harvested;
- ❖ the landowner must agree to follow the approved forest stewardship management plan for at least five years following thinning;
- ❖ each approved tract is subject to inspection by state or federal crews before, during and after the thinning to ensure that the conditions of this program are being followed;
- ❖ all activities and paper work needs to be completed and submitted by August 31, 2011.

For More Information

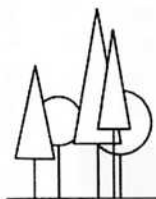
If you have questions, or would like to apply for SPB prevention cost shares, contact:

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For Additional Information, Contact:

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