



Oregon Forest Industries Council

Sudden Oak Death – 2010

An aggressive Sudden Oak Death eradication program protects Oregon's forest and nursery industries from the risk of quarantine.

Overview

Sudden Oak Death (SOD) was discovered in Curry County in 2001. It is caused by an invasive pathogen that kills primarily tanoak trees, and damages many other plants in western forests and horticultural nurseries. Douglas-fir, Oregon's dominant commercial tree species has been identified as a "host" species for SOD, which means it can contribute to the spread of the disease. This also means that Douglas-fir in Oregon could be subject to crippling state, national or international quarantines, with potentially devastating consequences for the state's economy. Also, if allowed to spread unchecked, SOD would seriously affect the ecology of forests in southwest Oregon and perhaps beyond.

SOD has been successfully eradicated on some sites through the aggressive cutting, burning and treatments of host plants. The disease continues to appear generally in new areas within or near the treatment area each year. Some years this was possibly due to unusually wet weather, while more recently, work reductions/curtailments stemming from lack of funding are more likely the cause. The Curry County quarantine area was expanded to 162 square miles in January 2008. The net effect of Oregon's prior aggressive eradication program has been a dramatic reduction in the rate of disease spread when compared to similar areas in California where there is no comprehensive control program.

The site-specific and labor-intensive nature of treating infected sites and buffer areas led to the exhaustion of state and federal funding allocated for this purpose in early 2008. In 2009 funding cuts to Department of Forestry budgets removed all remaining state resources and eliminated the "match" component necessary to secure all, or a portion of, \$825,000 in federal funds. Federal stimulus dollars (\$2.7 million) have temporarily helped restore eradication field work and monitoring.

OSU and ODA researchers and other experts believe that the disease can still be stopped in Oregon by continuing aggressive treatment efforts, but the "window" to do so will close soon if those efforts continue to be suspended. It is also important to control the spread further into nearby federal forests, where current federal policy severely limits herbicide use and other treatment options. Work curtailments resulting from funding issues greatly increases the risk of administrative and market-driven quarantines for Oregon's nursery and forest products.

Position

Every effort should be made to restore Oregon's consistent and aggressive SOD eradication program. Failure to do so could lead to market-driven quarantines that could in turn cause a severe curtailment of timber harvesting and the loss of thousands of forest sector jobs in Oregon. The state's nursery industry is equally at risk from the effects of possible quarantines.