

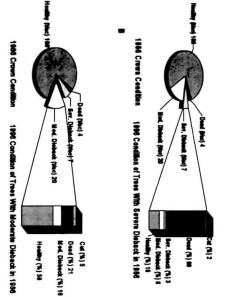
Healthy: 0-10% Crown Dieback, Moderate Dieback: 11-50% Crown Dieback Severe Dieback: >50% Crown Dieback, Dead: All Standing Dead Except Snags

Figure 2. Crown dieback ratings of dominant/codominant trees in Vermont hardwood stands in 1996 compared to 1986 and 1991.

Fate of Trees with Dieback in 1986

were now rated as healthy (Figure 3A). the moderate to severe dieback categories, while 18 percent percent after ten years. Eleven percent of them remained in Just over half of the overstory trees with severe dieback in 1986 died within the first five years and this increased to 69

none had severe dieback (figure 3B). In contrast, more than half of the overstory trees with years later. Sixteen percent still had moderate dieback; moderate dieback (11-50%) in 1986 had healthy crowns ten



Healthy: 0-10% crown dieback Severe Dieback: >50% crown dieback Mod. Dieback: 11-50% crown dieback v/ac = trees/acre

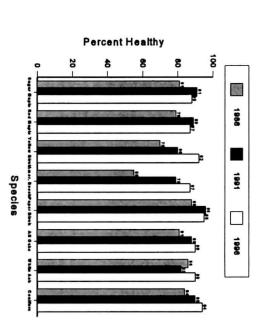
severe (A) or moderate (B) dieback in 1986. Figure 3. 1996 condition of all dominant/codominant trees with

> while most birch failed to recover from dieback in excess of beech and maple recovered from crown dieback up to 50% dieback were more likely to die than recover within the ten Although most overstory trees with more than 50% crown year period, there were some species differences. Most

Individual Species

Crown condition for most species of trees in Vermont living trees with healthy crowns varied widely by species in improve between 1991 and 1996. While the percentage of healthy in 1996 (Figure 4). hardwood stands stayed about the same or continued to 1986, most species were close to the survey average of 89%

Healthy: 0-10% Crown Dieback



Avc. No. Healthy Trees/Acre = 108.5 - 1986, 109.9 - 1991, 100 - 1996

1986, 1991, and 1996. healthy for predominant species in Vermont hardwood stands in Figure 4. Percent of living dominant/codominant trees rated as

some of the plots. drought conditions in 1995 probably impacted maples on and red maples dropped slightly during those 5 years, reflecting a shift to moderate dieback for some trees. The between 1991 and 1996. The percent of healthy sugar maple Yellow birch and beech showed the most improvement

This survey shows that overall, our hardwood forests are in

CONCLUSIONS

were healthy (less than 10% crown dieback) in 1996 tree health between species also decreased. At least 86% of compared to 86% in 1991 and 78% in 1986. Variability in good condition, with continued improvements since 1985. related to decreased insect damage and recent years with plots. Improvements in crown condition since 1986 may be the seven most frequently encountered species in the ground dominant/codominant trees were healthy in 1996 for each of detected. Over 89% of all trees in upper canopy positions indicates that the tree decline episode that began in the early the absence of standing dead overstory trees in ground plots The large decrease in dead trees visible in aerial photos and 1980's has run its course. No new evidence of decline was

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

be established on their property. the cooperation of the many landowners who allowed plots to and Recreation for developing this brochure. We appreciate thanks to Kathleen Decker, Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks assurance analysis of the remeasurement data. A special state and US Forest Service personnel who assisted in photo provided the photo interpretation training, Barry Russell was Dick Myhre designed the photography acquisition and Service and Bill Ciesla, USDA Forest Service. Jay Lackey idea to conduct this survey: Brent Teillon, Vermont Dept. of USDA Forest Service, Radnor, Pennsylvania for quality interpretation, and/or ground survey and Charles Barnett, Shaoang Zhang did the data analysis. We also thank all the the aerial photographer, Bill Snyder piloted the airplane , and special recognition for successfully undertaking the job as We acknowledge the forethought of the original authors of the USDA Forest Service, Forest Health Technology Enterprise Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation, deserves Forests, Parks and Recreation, Mel Weiss, USDA Forest Team in Fort Collins, Colorado who assisted in this survey. project foreman". We thank the people associated with the

Reference:

Frament. 32pp. and 1986. 1998. R. Kelley, E.L. Smith, S. M. Cox and Bill Vermont Hardwood Tree Health In 1996 Compared to 1991

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braille, and audio cassette. This brochure is available upon request in large print

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Hardwood Tree Health In 1996 Compared to 1991 and 1986 Vermont



Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation Agency of Natural Resources



United States Department of Agriculture



Forest Service

1998

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INTRODUCTION

In 1985 and 1986, a survey was initiated by the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation to determine the health status of Vermont's hardwood forests (Kelley and Eav 1987). This established a data base for future monitoring of tree condition and the effects of various stresses on hardwoods in the state. This survey was repeated in 1990 and 1991 and again in 1995 and 1996 to obtain the current health status of Vermont's hardwoods. All surveys were a cooperative effort with the U.S. Forest Service.

The specific objectives of each survey were to:

- determine number and volume of dead and declining hardwood trees per acre.
- determine the area of hardwood decline and mortality by mortality class.
- provide data on tree mortality, crown condition, site and stand factors to be used to determine stand trends over time.

The first survey followed a period between 1977 and 1982 when over one-fourth of Vermont's northern hardwoods (about 498,000 acres) were defoliated at least once by the forest tent caterpillar. This resulted in 33,000 acres of tree crown dieback and tree mortality. Thousands of additional acres were defoliated by outbreaks of gypsy moth, maple leaf cutter, and saddled prominent, as well as by late spring frosts in 1980 and 1986. Additional stress factors included below average precipitation and a cold, open winter in 1980-81. This occurred at a time when there was much public concern about the impacts of air pollutants on tree health.

The first repeat of this survey in 1990-91 showed improvements in tree condition (Kelley, Smith and Cox, 1992). Some of the ground evaluation procedures were refined for this survey to correspond with national monitoring standards that had been developed since 1986

SURVEY METHODS

Photo Interpretation

Color infrared aerial photos, representing approximately 1% of Vermont's forested area, were used to get a broad view of tree dieback and death and to serve as a basis for selection of ground plots. Mortality area was determined by counting dead and dying trees on photos covering 612,000 acres. These sample points were re-photographed in 1990 and 1995 to measure the change in number of dead and declining trees. At each photo point a 360 acre block was divided into 2.5 acre grid cells which were classified into one of the following mortality classes:

Photo Mortality Classes

- Class 1 no dead trees within the grid cell.
- Class 2 a single dead tree within the grid cell.
- Class 3 two to four dead trees within a grid cell.
- Class 4 five or more dead trees, but less than 10% dead trees within the grid cell.
- Class 5 from ten to thirty percent dead trees within the grid cell.
- Class 6 more than 30% dead

(In 1985 mortality classes consisted of light - less than 10% of the hardwood canopy trees were dead (classes 1 to 4, above), moderate - 10-30% canopy dead (class 5 above), and heavy - more than 30% dead (class 6))

Ground Survey

Ground survey methods were used to take a closer look at the extent of dieback and mortality. Based on interpretation of 1985 photos, two cells with heavy mortality, 22 cells with moderate mortality, and 51 cells with light mortality were intensively examined. Site and tree data were collected within each cell in 1986, 1991 and 1996.

Tree data were collected for all trees one inch in diameter or greater. This totaled over 2,000 trees in dominant or codominant (upper canopy) crown positions. Sugar maple, red maple and yellow birch were the species most frequently evaluated in 1986 and 1991, but beech replaced yellow birch as the third most abundant species by 1996.

Data included ratings for crown condition, including crown dieback. Dieback was based on visual estimates of the portion of tree crowns represented by twigs and branches that had recently died from the tips back.

Crown Dieback Ratings

- In 1986, these crown dieback ratings were used:
- Healthy
- No observable crown dieback
 1-10% dieback
- Moderate Dieback
 3: 11-25% dieback
- 4: 26-50% dieback
- Heavy Dieback
 5: 51-75% dieback
- 5: 51-75% dieback 6: Over 75% dieback

In 1991, crown dieback measurements were changed to 5% categories (0, 5, 10, 15, etc.) to compare to national forest health monitoring standards. These categories were combined during analysis of 1991 and 1996 data to make direct comparisons to 1986. Quality control assurance was obtained by remeasuring seven percent of the ground points by different observers to assess measurement repeatability. Ninety five percent of crown dieback remeasurements fell within ± 10% of the original 1996 field ratings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Area of Mortality

The statewide area of moderate or heavy tree mortality based on interpretation of aerial photographs decreased from over 13,000 acres in 1985 to 4,000 acres in 1990 and 1,000 acres in 1995 (Table 1).

Table 1. Area of Hardwood Mortality in Vermont in 1985, 1990 and 1995 Estimated by Photo Interpretation.
(Thousands of Acres)

Mortality Class*	19	1985	1990	90	1995
	Mean	Std. Error	Mean	Std. Error	Mean
Light - Class 1			1493	90	2431
Light - Class 2			665	40	547
Light - Class 3			464	37	215
Light - Class 4			67	14	16
Total Light	2,519	138	2,689	143	3,209
Moderate - Class 5	13	4	4	2	-
Heavy - Class 6	0.5	0.5	0	0	0

The number of acres with no dead trees visible increased from 1,500,000 acres in 1990 to over 24,000,000 acres in 1995 (Figure 1).

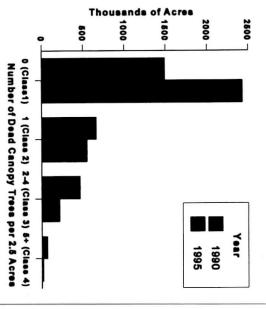


Figure 1. Statewide area of hardwoods estimated for the light mortality classes in 1990 and 1995 based on counts of dead canopy trees (described under Survey Methods/Photo Mortality Classes) visible on aerial photographs.

Tree Condition

All Species

This survey used a conservative definition of "healthy", meaning up to 10% crown dieback. Trees with over 10% dieback were labeled as declining. Based on this definition, most trees in the dominant and codominant crown positions were healthy in 1986, but 19 percent were rated as declining.

The percent of healthy trees increased from 77.8% in 1986 to 85.6% in 1991 and to 89.2% in 1996 (Figure 2).