

BUREAU OF PARKS AND LANDS (BPL)

Spruce Budworm Working Group

Potential Members:

Regional managers from North and East Regions, Chief of Silviculture, former USFS research forester with extensive experience with SBW, possibly a representative from the tourism/guiding sector (especially one specializing in guiding deer hunters)

The group will need to decide whether electronic communications will suffice or whether face-to-face meetings would be desirable. Given schedules, it is likely that the group will first meet during the first half of December.

The Issue:

For the past several years, feeding by spruce budworm (SBW) has been increasing in both extent and intensity in eastern Quebec. This has mainly been north of the St. Lawrence, but in 2014 some heavy feeding was reported south of the river and into northern New Brunswick. In 2015, heavy feeding was reported in the lands north of Quebec City, farther west than much of the damage and more in line to move into Maine. Given the historical basis for inter-epidemic periods, the timing is about right for another episode in Maine.

BPL Questions

--How vulnerable is the BPL forest, especially as it is made up of many dozen tracts within a matrix of other ownerships? Its spruce-to-fir ratio of nearly 3:1 is much higher than that for Maine as a whole. However, its higher stocking volumes result in the BPL forest holding 10% more fir volume per acre than statewide (and about twice the statewide spruce stocking.)

--We know that fir and white spruce are favored by SBW, but that in heavy infestations red spruce can be damaged and sometimes killed. How vulnerable is BPL spruce?

--What portions of the BPL forest are most important to protect? How can we best prioritize these areas?

--What are the estimated cost-benefit ratios for protection of differently valued forest areas? What are the costs per acre for application of available pesticides?

--Will the landowners (the people of Maine) and their elected representatives in the legislature accept an aerial pesticide spray program on BPL lands? A large-scale program?

--What pesticides are available and appropriate? Formulations of BT appear to hold the greatest promise. Another substance, the growth hormone regulator Mimic, is also a narrow-spectrum pesticide. However, it may be on the Forest Stewardship Council's list of unacceptable pesticides, which would make it unavailable for FSC-certified forests like those managed by BPL.

--Will a rising demand for species/genera-specific pesticides result in new and better tools?

--Would there be any support for using cheaper, but broader-spectrum, chemical pesticides?

--Given that it seems highly unlikely that the Maine Forest Service's 1970s-80s role in conducting the spray program will be repeated, would it be appropriate for BPL to join in a landowner cooperative spray program?

--Other questions, as they arise.