

Environmental News::

Trees Removed in Pisgah Forest

Nathan Jerkins, staff writer

Several trees were cut down and removed a few weeks ago across from the riding stables entrance on U.S. 276, in Pisgah Forest, North Carolina. The riding stables are roughly two miles beyond the Pisgah Forest ranger station. The southern pine beetle is the reason for removal of the trees. Ted Oprean, along with other foresters, designated four different areas that were cut and removed by a commercial logging company.

The southern pine beetle causes serious damage to any stand of pines that it infests. Once found, action must be taken as soon as possible. The beetle eats away at the live wood that is located just below the bark of the tree, and soon the tree is no longer able to sustain itself.

There are different suppression methods to counteract the beetle. The foresters can cut the trees and leave them, cut and remove the trees, cut and burn the trees, or cut and treat the area with pesticide.

The Pisgah foresters decided the most judicious way to handle the problem was to simply have the infested trees removed and sold to a commercial logger. Ted Oprean, the forester at the Pisgah Ranger Station said, "The most feasible action was to remove the infested trees."

The Forest Service capitalized on the misfortune of the discovery of the pine beetle by selling the pines that were lost. The downed logs would appear unsightly to any visitors in the Pisgah forest. "If we were along the coastline the trees could be left because the temperature is much higher and would cause the trees to rot and kill the pine beetle," Oprean said.

Now that there are a few more clearings in the forest, the opportunity for other projects has arisen. This cleared area could be a new picnic pull-off next to the road, or maybe the rangers have something new planned for this area. When approached with the idea of converting the newly cleared grounds, Oprean said, "That might be exactly what we do with the land."