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## 2010 FOREST HEALTH CONDITIONS HIGHLIGHTS STATE AND PRIVATE LANDS-ARIZONA

Easily the biggest event in 2010 was the unprecedented amount of destruction to the forests west of Flagstaff, caused by multiple tornados on October 6<sup>th</sup>. The level of damage and extent is still being assessed. A conservative estimate of 5600 acres may have been affected. An additional concern next spring is the potential for bark beetles to infest this material, and kill surrounding standing ponderosa pines, followed by fires once all this material has dried out.

Up until the tornados struck in October, the most significant event affecting our forests in 2010 was the widespread storm damage that occurred last winter. It was more widespread than the amount of damage noted in 2009 and damaged more species of trees. Windthrow, windbreak and snowbreak of trees were identified from Prescott to Upper Oak Creek Canyon, Flagstaff to Blue Ridge, Payson to Pine-Strawberry; Forest Lakes, Heber-Overgaard and Pinetop. And for the second consecutive year, the community of Summerhaven in the Catalina Mountains suffered the greatest damage, with several structures damaged by falling trees.

Bark beetle activity was again seen for the second consecutive year, in the Payson & Prescott areas in September 2010. Ponderosa pines and pinyons scattered throughout these communities were killed by these insects. The storm damage that occurred over the winter may have been a contributing factor to this increase. Additional bark beetle activity was also noted around areas that had been thinned and burned for fire prevention reasons. However, bark beetle activity continues at a low level statewide, but could increase in 2011 in the Flagstaff area following the Hardy and Schultz fires.

Pinyon needle scale continued to spread in the Payson area in 2010. This defoliating insect appeared abruptly in 2007 in Payson, and has also been detected in two surrounding communities. The native insect is also widely spread throughout the Prescott area covering thousands of acres. It was identified for the first time on pinyons in the Chiricahua Mountains near the community of Portal.

A native leafhopper continued to discolor and defoliate walnuts in the Star Valley and Pine areas in September and early October 2010. Extensive "leafhopper burn" of walnuts was first observed in Star Valley in 2005. It was also very widespread in 2009 in Gila County and other parts of the state. The insect is not considered a major concern at this time, due to the fact that the damage occurs late in summer, before the walnuts drop their leaves.

White pine blister rust continued to spread in the White Mountains, following its first discovery in 2009, on the road to Hawley Lake. Several other infected areas were also identified in 2009, but the non-native disease has not been detected noted in Greer or Alpine in 2010.

Concentrations of this disease have been mainly found along drainages where higher humidity occurs.

Non-native invasive plants continued to spread throughout our forests and woodlands in 2010. Natal grass imported from Africa continued its spread up the Catalina Highway along with the widespread Buffel grass. And two species of invasive knapweed can be widely seen in the Flagstaff area.

The usual variety of miscellaneous insects, diseases and other forest pathogens were detected in 2010. Fall webworm continues to defoliate an assortment of trees in Gila County but was also noted in the Show Low area in fall on walnuts. An uncommon root disease, which looked like plaster on the trunk & roots, was identified on a honey locust in Star Valley in July.

For further information about any of the detections mentioned in these highlights, contact Bob Celaya, Forest Health Specialist, Arizona State Forestry Division at 602-771-1415  
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