

Piñon Pine Mortality Event in the Southwest: An Update for 2005

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Abstract—Drought conditions in the Southwest have persisted for a number of years resulting in large areas of piñon pine mortality. In 2002 drought conditions became extreme, facilitating an outbreak of piñon ips beetles (*Ips confusus*, Coleoptera: Scolytidae) that killed many millions of piñon pines over a six-state region by 2003. In response to this unprecedented mortality, Forest Health Monitoring provided funds to Forest Health Protection units to measure the extent and intensity of the event. These impacts are being documented through an extensive network of permanent plots that were installed throughout much of the range of piñon in the southwestern United States in 2003 and 2004.

The results from this project reveal that the situation on the ground is a quickly changing phenomenon. While the huge amounts of mortality seen in 2003 were caused by the aforementioned piñon ips, mortality throughout much of the affected area decreased sharply in 2004. In addition, a number of other damaging agents played a more prominent role in the damage that did occur. Because conditions varied widely throughout the range of piñon pine, brief summaries from each of the participating Forest Health Protection units are presented.