

Hurricane Michael Destroys Timber in Houston County



While the majority of Alabama landowners escaped severe damage when Hurricane Michael made landfall on October 10, timberland owners in Houston County in the extreme southeast corner of the state were not quite as fortunate. Officials with the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) estimate timber losses at nearly \$20 million. Strike teams from the agency were immediately mobilized to assist with road clearing and debris removal in the area.

Aerial surveys conducted by the AFC indicated approximately 42,357 forested acres were damaged by the storm, totaling a value of \$19,916,759. Forest Inventory and Analysis data was used to compute the damage by forest type in the impact area (pine 13,396 acres; hardwood 2,879 acres; and mixed pine/hardwood 26,082 acres) as well as total dollar value.

Storm-damaged timber must be recovered in a timely manner if it is to be utilized, so forest owners should not delay in surveying their property. In the coming weeks and months, drying timber on the ground will create fuel for wildfires, and compromised timber is also more susceptible to southern pine beetle attack. However, State Forester Rick Oates says forest owners should not rush into having their trees clear cut without getting a professional to evaluate the situation. "Some folks have been growing their timber 10, 15, 25 or even more years," said Oates. "They need to take the time to make a sound decision, based on solid advice from a registered forester."

If your timber property was located in the path of Hurricane Michael and sustained damage, please contact the Alabama Forestry Commission at (334) 260-6260 or send an email to the agency at hurricane.michael@forestry.alabama.gov. For additional information to help in the recovery process, please visit www.forestry.alabama.gov. You may also consider utilizing the services of a registered forester to provide recommendations and/or handle selling your damaged timber. A list of registered foresters can also be found on our website. 