PUBLIC NOTICE ON SPONGY MOTH INFESTATION

WHO: Residents of Haywood/Jackson County

WHAT: Public Information Session to Discuss an Infestation of Spongy Moth in the Area

WHEN: Tuesday, February 18, 2025, at 6:00 P.M.

WHERE: Haywood Community College, 185 Freedlander Dr, Clyde, NC 28721, Main Hemlock Building Lobby

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) Plant Industry Division has scheduled a public information session on Tuesday, February 18th at Haywood Community College in the Main Hemlock Building Lobby. The purpose of the session is to permit NCDA&CS staff to provide information on a spongy moth infestation that has been detected in your area, review treatment alternatives for the infestation, and to receive information from the public. The session format will provide adequate time for questions and public comments.

No decision will be made on the treatment alternatives for this infestation until residents of the area have had an opportunity to express their comments through this public session. All members of the public are encouraged to attend.

If you are not able to attend the session and you would like additional information on this spongy moth infestation, please contact the NCDA&CS Plant Industry Division at 800-206-9333 or 919-707-3730. Resources are also online at the NCDA&CS web site: https://www.ncagr.gov/proposed-spongy-moth-management

HISTORY AND BIOLOGY OF THE SPONGY MOTH

The spongy moth, *Lymantria dispar L.*, is a defoliator of hardwood trees that is native to northern Africa, Europe, and parts of Asia. The spongy moth first invaded the U.S. in 1869 when it escaped from a house in Medford, Massachusetts where attempts were being made to cross it with native silkworm moths. Since that time, the insect has spread throughout the northeastern and mid-Atlantic U.S. and into Canada. Several days after hatching, young caterpillars hang from tree limbs by silk threads that allow them to be carried by wind currents and spread to other areas. Although the spongy moth can spread relatively short distances on its own, it is also transported by humans when egg masses are unintentionally transported on the items listed below. Each egg mass can contain as many as 1,000 viable eggs. In the forest, adult female moths hide their egg masses in a variety of places, including bark crevices, tree holes, and under vines on tree trunks. However, when the spongy moth invades areas inhabited or used by people,

these hiding places frequently include outdoor articles such as tents, firewood, doghouses, utility sheds, garbage cans, lawn furniture, and recreational vehicles.
The Slow the Spread (STS) Pilot Project was started in 1992 with a goal of demonstrating that the rate at which spongy moth populations colonize new areas can be reduced. The project uses techniques that are both environmentally safe and cost effective. This pilot program was proven successful and became fully operational in 2000. Management decisions within STS are primarily based on the presence of male spongy moths in any given area, determined by utilizing traps baited with the female spongy moth sex pheromone. The project currently operates in portions of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, North Carolina, Minnesota, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.

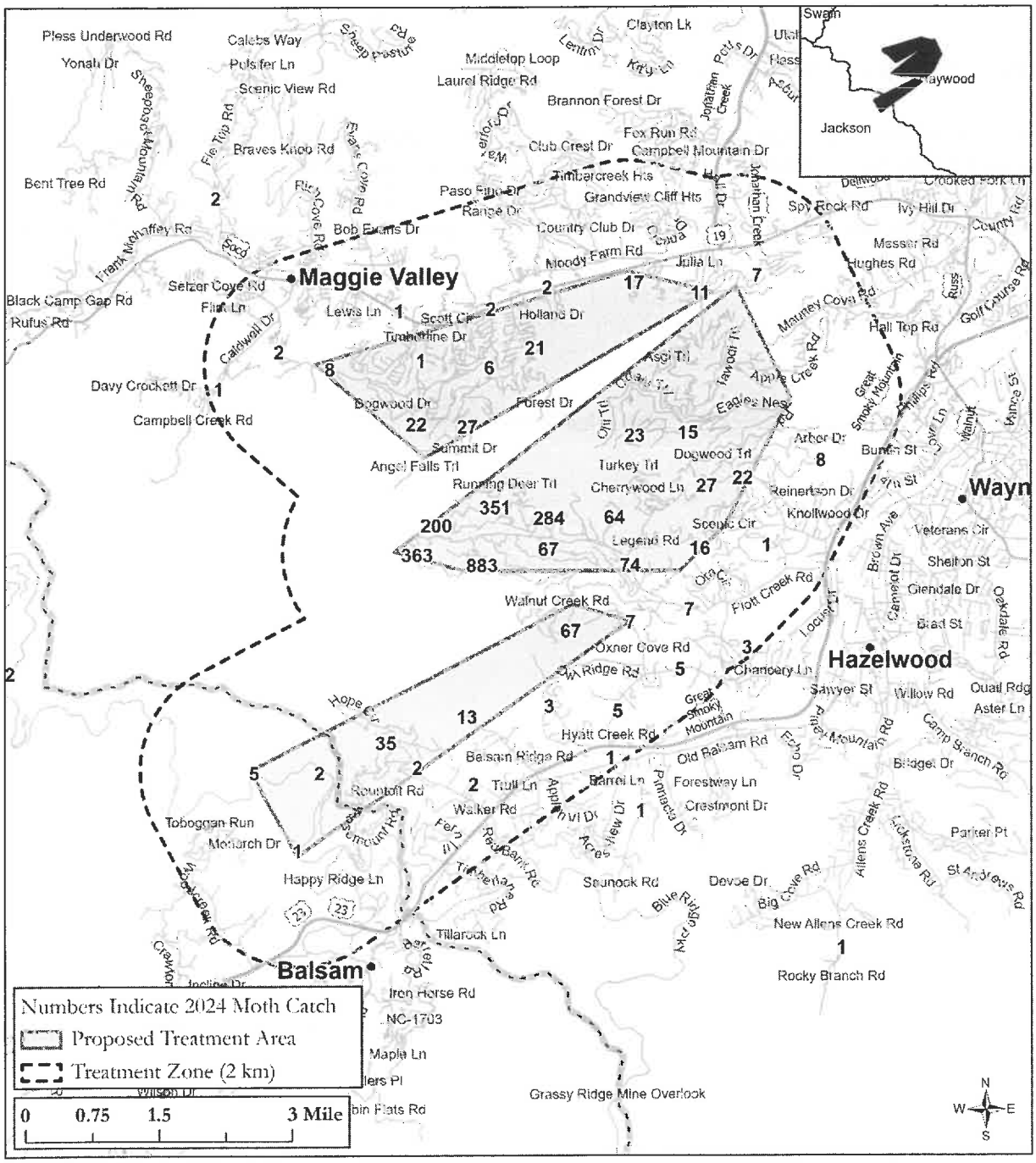
IMPACT OF THE SPONGY MOTH

The impact of a spongy moth infestation varies year to year. The direct impact of spongy moth defoliation ranges from barely noticeable to devastating, depending upon population density, tree health, and weather conditions. For hardwood species such as oak, mortality of trees in fair or poor health, or those stressed by drought or frost, can occur after two consecutive years of defoliation. Trees that are in good condition will grow new leaves later in the season but they use food reserves that were intended for the next season. Reduction in food reserves in trees reduces their ability to withstand future defoliation or stress. The most dangerous effect of spongy moth defoliation is an increase in tree susceptibility to secondary pests such as wood boring beetles and fungi. Older spongy moth larvae may attack conifer species, such as pines, resulting in tree mortality after just one year of defoliation. The economic burden of a severe spongy moth defoliation can be great when homeowners are faced with a number of large, dead yard trees that must be removed. Likewise, timberland owners may be faced with a reduction in timber value as valuable hardwoods are killed.

The spongy moth can also be a nuisance to the general public. In heavily infested areas, caterpillars may crawl on driveways, sidewalks, outdoor furniture, into homes, or end up in swimming pools. In parks and recreation areas, defoliation may affect the aesthetics of the surroundings. If inhaled, some people can have allergic reactions to the caterpillars' tiny hairs.

PROPOSED TREATMENT AREA DESCRIPTION

Waynesville area: These three proposed treatment blocks totaling 5,990 acres are located in Haywood and Jackson counties. The westernmost corner of the blocks is located just north of mile marker 447 of the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the easternmost corner of the blocks is located one mile east of the intersection of US HWY 23 and Sylvan St. A portion of the Blue Ridge Parkway between mile markers between 445 and 447 lies inside this block. There are approximately 2,560 commercial or residential lots present within one mile of the block. In 2023, we caught a total of thirteen male moths in these blocks. In 2024, that number increased to two thousand six hundred and twenty-seven, signifying that a reproducing population is present. One application of Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki is proposed for these blocks.


Maggie Valley
Balsam
Hazelwood
Waynesville
Swain
Jackson
Haywood
Numbers Indicate 2024 Moth Catch
Proposed Treatment Area
Treatment Zone (2 km)
0 0.75 1.5 3 Mile
N
W
E
S

PROPOSED TREATMENT AREA MAP

This is a map showing roads and streams in the proposed treatment areas. The areas shaded in gray are the blocks in which the actual treatment would take place. The area inside the dotted lines is the treatment zone, an area in which aircraft might be flying low as they turn, but not actually treating. Numbers indicate the number of male spongy moths captured at those locations in 2024.