

Coordinated Ice Storm Recovery Efforts

Neither Rain, nor Hail, nor Snow, but Ice ...

The Challenge

In February 2003, two weather systems affected the Northeast and Midwest over the Valentine's/President's Day weekend. A low-pressure system rode northeastward from the Gulf of Mexico and then collided with an Arctic high-pressure system to the north, resulting in severe winter weather.

In southern Ohio, warmer air caused the precipitation to accumulate as 2 to 5 inches of ice. Branches and fallen trees blocked roadways and disrupted utilities throughout Gallia, Lawrence, and Scioto Counties. Many communities were without electric and phone service, and many areas were inaccessible for more than a week as road crews cleared away the woody debris from roads and utility lines.

The storm also impacted the Dean and Shawnee State Forests and the Wayne National Forest in southern Ohio. Trees by the hundreds were either uprooted and lying on the ground or their limbs and crowns were broken. Recreation facilities were damaged and trails were closed. These public lands and facilities provide a multitude of social, economic, and ecological benefits to the area, such as outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities, watershed protection, wildlife habitat, and jobs in forest-related businesses and industries. It was important for the USDA Forest Service and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Forestry to quickly assess the scope and magnitude of damage caused by the storm so that an appropriate response could be planned.

The Solution

USDA Forest Service personnel from the Morgantown Field Office, Forest Health Protection Program, and the Wayne National Forest, Ironton Ranger District, along with the ODNR Division of Forestry, coordinated sketch mapping survey flights of the Ironton Ranger District and the Shawnee and Dean State Forests to assess the damage

The scope of the storm's impacts needed to be assessed quickly and accurately.



The Valentine's/President's Day ice storm impacted forest resources and recreation facilities on public lands in southern Ohio.

caused by the storm. The survey flights indicated that damage ranged from light to moderate over much of the Ironton Ranger District and throughout both State forests, with many trees having some amount of crown damage. Smaller pockets, up to hundreds of acres in size, had impacts that ranged from heavy to severe, with a high percentage of the trees in these stands badly damaged or uprooted.

Resulting Benefits

The surveys provided a quick assessment of the ice storm impacts. Based on these results:

- The Wayne National Forest and the ODNR Division of Forestry were able to plan and implement cleanup and salvage operations to reduce hazardous fuel buildups from woody debris and eliminate safety hazards to forest visitors caused by fallen limbs and trees.

Sharing Success

The coordinated surveys, assessment reports, and cleanup efforts are an excellent example of Federal and State land managers working together to improve forest health conditions; decrease the risk to the environment, residences, and communities from wildfire; and reestablish recreation and tourism opportunities.



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