

2008 Gypsy Moth Suppression

This year, gypsy moth infestations in many forested areas of Frederick County are severe enough to potentially defoliate thousands of acres of forest. High tree mortality can result from gypsy moth defoliation two or more years in a row or when other stresses to the forests are present such as drought. In 2008, thousands of acres of Frederick County Forest are expected to be defoliated, unless treated. The Frederick County Forest Conservancy District Board (the County Forestry Board) has been working with the support of the Frederick County Commissioners and the State and other organizations to combat the increased risk of damage to the forests of Frederick County this year.

Gypsy moths, native to parts of Europe, Asia and Africa, were brought to the U.S. for a breeding experiment to produce a more robust silk worm. After their accidental release in U.S. in the 1860's they have proliferated in the absence of the natural controls present in their native habitat. Gypsy moth larvae (caterpillars) have voracious appetites and thrive on the hardwood forests of our area, with oaks being their preferred diet.

In late 2007, The Frederick Forestry Board conducted a planning workshop and follow-up meeting to educate property owners of the anticipated spring time infestation of gypsy moths and the potential defoliation of Frederick forests. Since that time, several interested landowners are working with the Board in a Frederick Co. MD Gypsy Moth Task Force to help arrange a coordinated spray program. The Frederick County Commissioners and State government agencies are providing support to the effort to allow aerial spraying of private forest land at reduced rates to suppress the infestation. More information is available on the Task Force WebSite (<http://fcgypsymoth.info/index.html>).