

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 1, 2018

Spruce beetle activity continues to rise in Southcentral Alaska

(Anchorage, AK) – Aerial surveys conducted this summer by state and federal forest health specialists documented nearly 558,000 acres of active spruce beetle-caused tree mortality in Southcentral Alaska. The surveys are part of an annual program to detect forest insect and disease occurrences in Alaska forests. With the addition of this year's data, the cumulative area impacted by spruce beetle in the region is estimated to have grown to roughly 910,000 acres since the current spruce beetle outbreak began in 2016.

Spruce beetles are native to Alaska and outbreaks have occurred regularly throughout history. The recent spruce beetle activity is located primarily in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and on the northwestern Kenai Peninsula. Within these areas, over 500,000 acres of active spruce beetle damage were observed in the Matanuska-Susitna River valleys and about 48,000 acres of beetle activity were mapped on the northwestern Kenai Peninsula this year. The dead and declining spruce trees caused by this insect are highly visible in these areas. Additionally, spruce beetle activity was observed this year in the northern portions of the Municipality of Anchorage (1,500 ac) as well as scattered, small pockets of activity within the remainder of the municipality.

These aerial surveys are conducted by Alaska Division of Forestry and U.S. Forest Service Forest Health Protection staff and cover a subset of the state's forests each year. As such, the information collected during these surveys may not necessarily depict the entirety of the outbreak. State and federal forest health professionals are working together to provide information and develop additional tools to help Alaskans combat the outbreak. For information on upcoming free public workshops, signs and symptoms of spruce beetle attacks, recommendations on mitigating spruce beetle, and more, visit www.alaskasprucebeetle.org.

Additional information is available at:

U.S. Forest Service, Forest Health Protection: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/alaskasprucebeetle>


DNR Division of Forestry, Forest Health Program: <http://forestry.alaska.gov/insects/>

CONTACT: Jason Moan, DNR Division of Forestry (907) 269-8460, jason.moan@alaska.gov
Tim Mowry, DNR Division of Forestry (907)356-5512, tim.mowry@alaska.gov
Elizabeth Graham, USDA Forest Service, Forest Health Protection (907) 586-8883, eegraham@fs.fed.us
Alicia King, UDSA Forest Service, (907) 743-9444, aliciaking@fs.fed.us

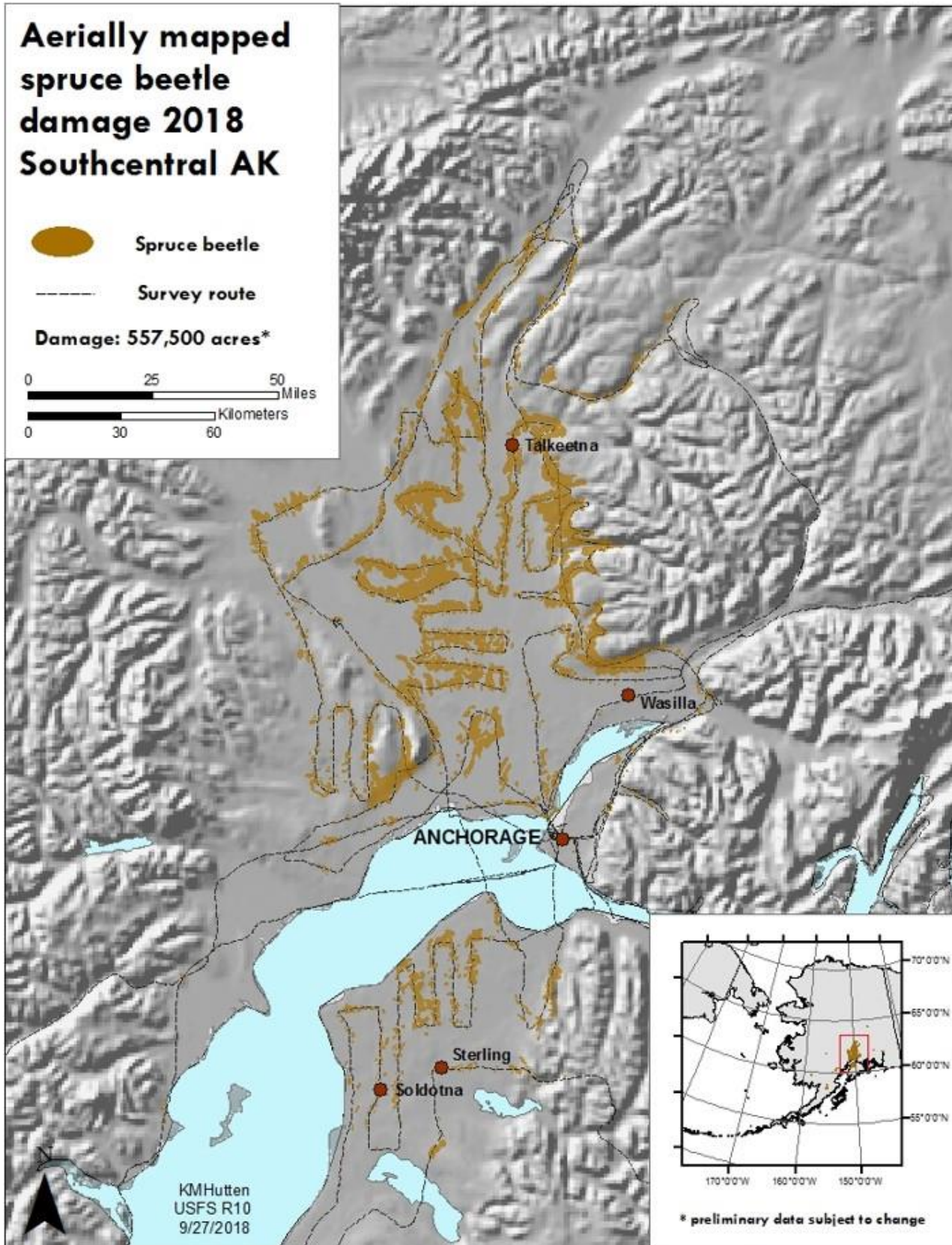


Aerially mapped spruce beetle damage 2018 Southcentral AK

 Spruce beetle

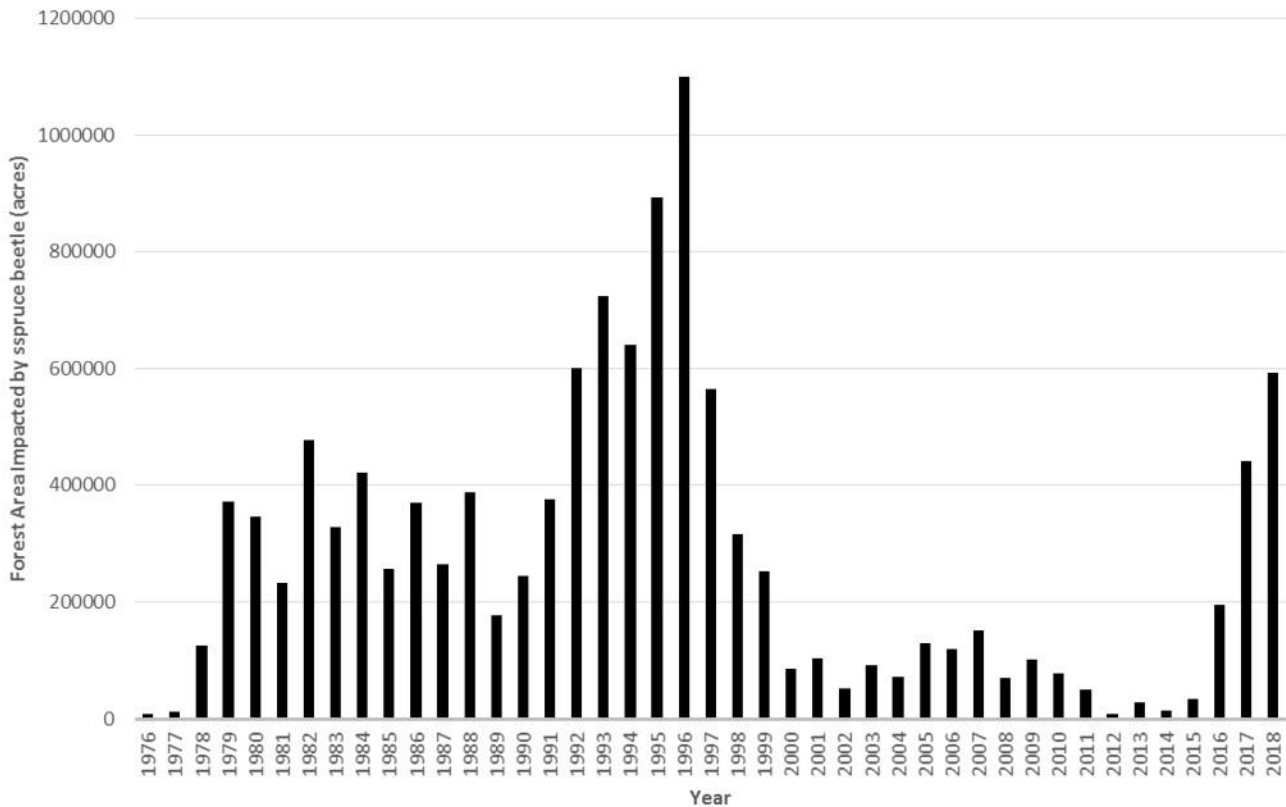
 Survey route

Damage: 557,500 acres*



Spruce beetle damage in Southcentral Alaska recorded during the annual aerial forest insect and disease detection surveys. Note: Polygon boundaries have been exaggerated to improve visibility and data is still under review

SPRUCE BEETLE DAMAGE STATEWIDE 1976-2018



Spruce beetle damage mapped statewide during annual aerial forest insect and disease detection surveys since 1976

Year	Statewide Total	Mat-Su Borough	Kenai Peninsula Borough	Municipality of Anchorage
2018	593,000	504,000	52,000*	1,500
2017	405,000	321,000	71,000	18
2016	188,000	162,000	23,000	10
2015	33,000	15,000	9,000	0

Recent spruce beetle damage mapped during aerial detection survey in Southcentral separated by municipalities (rounded to nearest thousand).

*Roughly 4,000 acres of the damage was within the borough on the west side of Cook Inlet.