



NEWS RELEASE



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US FOREST SERVICE AND COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE ANNOUNCE RESULTS OF FOREST HEALTH SURVEY

DENVER, Jan. 21, 2011 — The US Forest Service and Colorado State Forest Service announced the results of the 2010 forest health annual aerial survey today. Survey results reveal that the bark beetle infestation affected about 400,000 new acres in 2010 across the three forests in Colorado and southern Wyoming, bringing the total number of acres of infestation up to 4 million since the first signs of outbreak in 1996. This acreage includes lodgepole, five-needle and ponderosa pine tree types.

While the bark beetle continues to spread rapidly along the Front Range and into ponderosa pine trees, forest managers are focusing their efforts on public and employee safety to help protect them from the threat of falling trees and increased fire danger.

“We were extremely aggressive in 2010 with our efforts to remove trees killed by the bark beetle to reduce the risk of falling trees to forest visitors and employees,” said Tony Dixon, US Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region, Acting Regional Forester. “There is still much work to be done and we will use every tool available to continue this critical work, including work through valuable partnerships with sister agencies, communities, the wood products industry and others.”

“The Colorado State Forest Service works with approximately 8,500 landowners annually to help them address forestry concerns on their property and implement forest management plans that will reduce fire hazards and create more resilient forests,” said Jeff Jahnke, state forester and director of the Colorado State Forest Service. “The annual aerial forest health survey is an important tool in identifying high-priority areas for treatment and helping landowners focus their efforts to achieve the greatest benefits.”

Continued cooperation among local, state and federal land management agencies, communities and private landowners is essential to efforts to mitigate fire hazards, protect communities and critical infrastructure, and restore forest health, say Dixon and Jahnke. Forest-based economies in Colorado that have been hardest hit by the beetle epidemic are working with forestry officials to find mutually beneficial solutions to the challenges associated with managing the impacts of the epidemic and creating resilient forests for the future.

Management of Colorado’s forests is especially important over the next few decades to provide a mix of age classes and tree species. Doing nothing would most likely result in several hundred thousand acres of the same age class of trees, setting the stage for another mass disturbance like the bark beetle epidemic. Forest management can help create healthy stands of trees that consist of diverse species and age classes that will be more resilient to insect and disease epidemics.

For complete survey results please visit: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/r2>.