



NEWS RELEASE

USDA FOREST SERVICE
Rocky Mountain Region
740 Simms Street Golden, CO 80401

For Immediate Release

August 31, 2007

Contact: Mary Ann Chambers 970 295-6676 or
970 420-6992

Forest Service Introduces Seven-county Bark Beetle Mitigation Plan

Denver, Colorado: The U.S. Forest Service has released a proposed seven-county implementation plan to mitigate the effects of the bark beetle epidemic. The plan covers more than 80,000 acres of bark beetle mitigation projects over the next five years using a variety of treatments.

The current epidemic was triggered by drought in 1997. The infestation has occurred on 755,000 acres in northern Colorado and southeastern Wyoming. More than 1.5 million acres of lodgepole pine in northern Colorado and southeastern Wyoming could be affected by the time the epidemic ends.

The plan focuses treatments on portions of the White River, Arapaho-Roosevelt, and Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests in Summit, Eagle, Grand, Jackson, and Routt counties and Albany and Carbon counties in southeastern Wyoming. Other counties in Colorado maybe included as the strategic analysis continues. None of the proposed treatments are in wilderness areas or inventoried roadless areas.

"We cannot control the epidemic, but we can reduce fuels and remove dead trees to protect natural resource values, communities, lives, and property in a cooperative effort with our neighbors and partners," said Deputy Regional Forester Richard Stem of the Rocky Mountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service.

The beetles know no boundaries, and communities are joining together to reduce hazards and get ready for the next forest. The Colorado Bark Beetle Cooperative includes the U.S. Forest Service; Bureau of Land Management; Colorado State Forest Service; Clear Creek, Eagle, Garfield, Grand, Jackson, Lake, Park, Pitkin, Routt, and Summit counties; municipalities; utility companies and water districts; and the environmental community. The Cooperative was formed to work collaboratively on problems facing this rapidly changing landscape.

"Actions the Forest Service, state, municipalities, and counties take will reduce wildfire hazards adjacent to communities. The Colorado Bark Beetle Cooperative will continue to work to identify priority areas on all jurisdictions," said Gary Severson, executive director of Northwest Colorado Council of Governments and one of the organizers of the 10-county cooperative formed to deal with the bark beetle.

"This is an ambitious plan in a time of dwindling budgets. The key will be to expend the scant resources where there's community consensus on priorities. I look forward to continuing to collaborate with the Forest Service to get chainsaws humming on the ground in the right places," said Sloan Shoemaker, executive director of the Wilderness Workshop and environmental community representative to the Colorado Bark Beetle Cooperative."

To help the Forest Service meet the demands of the increased program, the Forest Service has assembled an incident management team who is handling this as they would a fire or other emergency. Specialists from across the country have been recruited to lay out and contract the work that needs to be done to reduce wildfire and falling tree hazards. Other objectives of this effort include increasing the diversity of the forest by species and age classes and continuing reforestation and restoration to shape the next forest.

"There is no shortage of work to accomplish as the bark beetle progresses throughout northern Colorado and southeastern Wyoming. Working in collaboration with all our partners will help us maximize our treatment acres with our limited resources. Working together is the key to success," said Clint Kyhl, bark beetle incident commander.

"We applaud the Forest Service's initiative to ramp up their response to the mountain pine beetle epidemic. The window of opportunity to be most effective is very short. We are committed to working with the members of the Colorado Bark Beetle Cooperative to secure the necessary resources for the Forest Service to aggressively implement their new strategy," said Tom Troxel, executive director of the Colorado Timber Industry Association.

The Colorado Congressional Delegation provided an additional \$2 million in 2007 to address the bark beetle issue. These funds, combined with the Regional focus, continue to accelerate the pace of actions the Forest Service is taking to mitigate the effects of the bark beetle.

Jeff Jahnke, state forester and director of the Colorado State Forest Service, said, "We support the expanded efforts the U.S. Forest Service is undertaking to address the bark beetle issue in Colorado. The work they are doing will contribute to successful implementation of the Colorado Bark Beetle Cooperative's long-term strategy to protect communities and create more resilient forests in the future."

To see the Seven-county Bark Beetle Mitigation Plan go to www.fs.fed.us/r2, click on Regional Bark Beetle Information, and see the links to the plan and maps.

Projects Completed and Planned

A summary of the proposed acres under each treatment category are displayed in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1. Summary of Treatment Acres Proposed in the Seven Counties by Fiscal Year.

| Treatment Category | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
|---|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Timber Salvage and Stewardship Projects | 5,000 | 9,100 | 10,000 | 10,600 | 5,600 | 4,400 |
| Fuels Treatments (All types) | 5,000 | 11,300 | 24,200 | 15,000 | 13,600 | 8,800 |
| Forest Health | 1,000 | 1,000 | 2,000 | 500 | 500 | 500 |
| Hazard Reduction | 0 | 100 | 3,500 | 6,900 | 300 | 300 |
| Total Footprint Area Treated | 7,000 | 15,000 | 26,000 | 32,000 | 14,000 | 10,000 |

Figure 1. Summary of Treatment Acres Proposed in the Seven Counties by Fiscal Year.

