

NEWS RELEASE

Wyoming State Forestry Division

Intermountain & Rocky Mountain Regions, U.S. Forest Service



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Forestry Agencies Release 2015 Aerial Survey Results for Wyoming

Cheyenne, WY, February 12, 2016 – Today, the Wyoming State Forestry Division (WSFD) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS), released the 2015 forest health aerial survey results for Wyoming. Every year the USFS and WSFD work together to aerially monitor forest health conditions on millions of forested acres across the state. Aerial survey observations of tree-damaging insects and diseases native to Wyoming's forests are highlighted below.

2015 Aerial Survey Highlights

- Mountain pine beetle activity declined from 113,000 acres 2014 to 34,000 acres in 2015.
 - The epidemic has ended in many areas of Wyoming, as mature pine trees have been depleted in core outbreak areas.
 - High elevation limber and whitebark pines, primarily in western Wyoming, accounted for 26,000 of the affected acres.
 - About 1,200 acres of ponderosa pine in northeastern Wyoming's Black Hills were also affected.
- Spruce beetle outbreaks caused tree mortality primarily in western Wyoming.
 - In 2015, spruce beetle infestations were detected on 68,000 acres in Wyoming. 66,000 of these acres were in the western Wyoming Counties of Fremont, Teton, and Sublette.
 - Spruce beetle outbreaks expanded onto 44,000 acres of previously unaffected forests.
 - Since 1996, spruce beetle outbreaks have caused varying degrees of tree mortality on more than 682,000 acres in Wyoming.
 - Blowdown events, combined with long-term drought stress, warmer temperatures and extensive amounts of older, dense spruce, have contributed to ongoing epidemics.
- Western spruce budworm caused detectable defoliation of Douglas-fir, and to a lesser extent of spruce, on 11,000 acres in Park County on the Shoshone National Forest. This is a decrease from 26,000 acres of defoliation detected in 2014.

"The area impacted by the mountain pine beetle in the Black Hills is still growing; we continue working to slow the spread. The cooperation between the two states, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, local governments, and industry serves as a model for other areas dealing with similar issues," said Bill Crapser, Wyoming State Forester.

Agency Highlights

The WSFD is committed to providing professional forestry service, information and education to the citizens of Wyoming to achieve resilient forests and communities.

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In 2015, the WSFD treated more than 5,000 acres in Wyoming, predominantly on private and state lands, as part of forest management, forest health and wildfire mitigation efforts.

The USFS is committed to active forest management, which includes maintaining and restoring healthy and diverse landscapes, promoting forest and grassland resilience in the face of climate change and other environmental stressors, reducing the risk to communities and natural resources from wildfire, and sustaining diverse wildlife habitat. Along with partners, the USFS is investing in projects across the State to improve forest health.

“Although the Mountain pine beetle epidemic has slowed, we continue addressing areas where it has spread,” said Nora Rasure, Regional Forester for the Intermountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service. “Working with our valued partners, we are investing in forest management projects to restore forest health, which creates resilient forests, reduces wildfire risk, and supports local economies, added Dan Jirón, Regional Forester for the Rocky Mountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service.

Last year in Wyoming the USFS treated approximately 140,845 acres through timber harvests, thinning and prescribed fire.

Project Highlights

- The [Pole Mountain Landscape Fuels Treatment Partnership](#) on the Medicine Bow and Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland was formed to work across federal, state and private lands to improve forest health, enhance wildlife habitats, and protect the South Platte, Upper Lodgepole, and Crow watersheds. This partnership is part of the larger Pole Mountain Vegetation Project which will treat approximately 8,600 acres on the Pole Mountain unit over 7-10 years.
- The Bighorn National Forest has used [Farm Bill](#) tools to expedite environmental analyses and treat almost 1,400 acres within the Governor’s Insect and Disease Treatment Area Designations in 2015. Several thousand acres are planned using these tools in the next few years.
- The Black Hills National Forest is poised to implement forest health and mountain pine beetle response projects in Northeast Wyoming.
- In western Wyoming, the Bridger-Teton National Forest, Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forests continue to treat hazardous fuels, which includes harvesting beetle-killed or infested trees. For example, the [Roughneck Vegetation Restoration Project](#) located in portions of Uinta County, Wyoming, and Summit County, Utah, approximately 15 miles south of Mountain View, Wyoming, proposes to treat approximately 5,550 acres of National Forest System lands.

Together, the WSFD and the USFS plan to use the [Good Neighbor Authority](#) to perform watershed restoration and forest management services on National Forest System lands. A Master Good Neighbor Agreement is expected to finalize soon by both agencies. The overarching agreement fosters a collaborative approach and leverages state resources to accomplish work across land ownership boundaries onto National Forest System lands. Both agencies are working to identify eligible projects to protect water supplies, manage insect infestations, reduce wildfire risk and meet other forest management objectives.

For the 2015 Aerial Detection Survey highlights and maps, visit:
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/USFSR2ForestHealth>.