

Our Future Forests: Beyond Bark Beetles

Aaron Voos, Public Affairs Specialist, Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland

The recent mountain pine beetle outbreak in the western United States has dramatically changed forests and with that change has come a need for public information and education on the topic. The Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and the University of Wyoming Ruckelshaus Institute of Environment and Natural Resources share a mission to inform and educate on natural resource issues, and from that common ground a unique partnership has grown. In two years' time, that partnership has resulted in the successful launch of a multi-pronged project, whose goal is to help the public better understand the bark beetle outbreak and its' complexities.

Most recently the two organizations collaborated to conceptualize and produce a series of 10 short videos, entitled **Our Future Forests: Beyond Bark Beetles**, which explore effects of and responses to the beetle epidemic.

The films introduce viewers to a cast of characters who are dealing with bark beetles and share actions that agencies and members of the public are taking to respond to the outbreak. Examples of U.S. Forest Service actions include spraying high-value trees to protect them from beetles, cleaning up campgrounds, planting new trees, collaborating with cities on water management, monitoring hydrologic changes, working with the timber industry to give beetle-killed wood a new life as useful wood products, and more.

Each film is three to six minutes long and they are publicly available online at BeyondBarkBeetles.org. A month of local public showings and presentations preceded the launch of the web site in May.



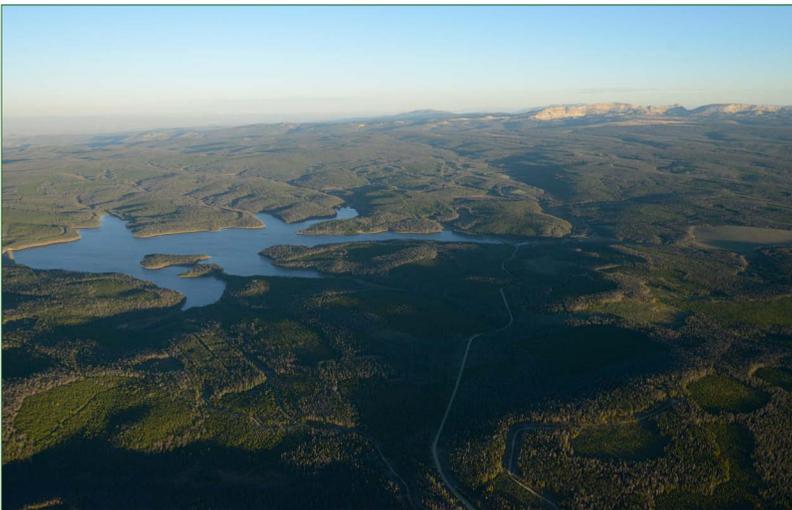
Above left: Filming with Laramie Ranger District Timber Crew fall of 2013 in the Snowy Range, Medicine Bow NF.

Above right: Videographer Morgan Heim filming Wyoming Game & Fish Biologist Tony Mong in the Sierra Madre, Medicine Bow NF, fall of 2013.

Videographer Morgan Heim interviews USFS Wildlife Biologist Melissa Dressen at Hanging Lake on the Routt NF, summer of 2013.

photos courtesy U.S. Forest Service.

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Above: Tree planting at Teal Lake Campground, Routt National Forest, summer of 2013.

Below: Aerial view of Rob Roy Reservoir, Medicine Bow National Forest, fall of 2013.

photos courtesy Joe Riis

From a light-hearted cartoon about an individual beetle's life cycle to a lyrical vignette following harvested beetle-kill through a sawmill, the series looks at the bark beetle outbreak from various angles. In addition to U.S. Forest Service staff, viewers meet professors, volunteers, hunters, rock climbers, fire lookouts, city water managers, and many other diverse characters.

All the videos were filmed in the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests in Wyoming and Colorado. Locations include the Sierra Madre, Hahns Peak Lake, Vedauwoo, Laramie Peak and others. Acclaimed videographer Morgan Heim shot and edited the videos.

This video series is one piece of a four-pronged project that has included a public speaker series, publication of an annotated bibliography for forest managers, and creating a library of forest photos for various uses. All of which will help people better understand the bark beetle epidemic.

By sharing resources and expertise, the University of Wyoming and Forest Service partnership has resulted in a large-scale public education and outreach effort that neither entity would have been able to produce alone.

For More Information

Visit: www.beyondbarkbeetles.org

Call: Aaron Voos, Public Affairs Specialist, [Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland](#) at 307-745-2323.

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