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News - For immediate release

Lodgepole pines are most vulnerable to beetles

The Town of Estes Park offers free *Beetle Buster* inspections and free disposal of infested trees.

Lodgepole pines are often one of the first types of tree to grow in an area after a major disturbance such as a fire or insect outbreak. Pure stands, or forests consisting of only lodgepole pines, occur around 9,000 and 10,000 feet in elevation, but the trees grow anywhere between 6,000 and 11,000 feet. Lodgepole pines usually live 250 years or less, and after 80 years they are increasingly susceptible to disturbances. Since the average age of stands in Colorado is between 80 and 200 years, lodgepole pines are extremely vulnerable to mountain pine beetle (MPB) infestation.

Under ideal conditions, fires help maintain a varied landscape, with scattered stands of lodgepole pine of different ages. But the absence of fire and other factors has left lodgepole pine populations weakened, with little variation in age or tree size. The MPB has taken advantage of these vulnerable stand conditions.

Most scientists agree that mitigation practices like thinning and patch cutting are unlikely to stop the current MPB outbreak in lodgepole pine, because the outbreak covers such a vast land area and is spreading so rapidly. And although removing infested trees is unlikely to stop the outbreak, removal may help other species growing nearby which are susceptible to MPB infestation, such as ponderosa pine.

In the next few years, homeowners will have a chance to manage regenerating trees for optimal future forest health as mature trees die from pine beetle attacks. The best way to achieve a low-density lodgepole pine forest is to start to thin regularly when trees are small saplings, and then maintain appropriate densities as the trees mature. Younger trees may become more resistant to MPB infestation as a result of less-crowded growing conditions that follow thinning. Where replanting is needed, property owners can promote maximum diversity for the future forest by replanting with species other than lodgepole pine.

Take Action Now

The Town offers free *Beetle Buster* inspections by calling the Public Works Department at 970-577-3588. A trained *Beetle Buster* volunteer will visit with property owners and confirm successful beetle attacks on trees. Beetle Busters can provide advice on forest health and recommendations specific to the landowner's situation.

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The Town of Estes Park provides free disposal of infested trees from Estes Valley properties at a sort yard located at 666 Elm Road. The site is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Trees must be stripped of branches, cut into sections and delivered to the site by the property owner. Logs should be kept as long as possible for transportation. Although shorter logs are accepted, logs at least 8 feet 3 inches in length are preferred. Shorter logs will be burned in an air-curtain burner, while logs longer than 8 feet 3 inches will be treated and used as wood products such as fence poles and lumber. For more information, please call the Town Public Works Department at 970-577-3588.

For more treatment options, visit www.estes.org/publicworks to download a copy of the free publication *Northern Front Range Landowner Guide to Living with Bark Beetles*, or pick up a copy outside Room 150 of Town Hall, located at 170 MacGregor Avenue.

This is the third article in a series that will appear through April, 2010. The Town of Estes Park Public Information Office utilizes scientific information provided by the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Colorado State Forest Service, Colorado State University, and Larimer, Jefferson, Clear Creek, Boulder and Gilpin Counties. For more information on pine beetles and Town services, please visit www.estes.org/publicworks or call 970-577-3588. To receive Town news in your e-mail inbox, please e-mail townadmin@estes.org.

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