

President's Stump

When the mountain pine beetle epidemic grew to gigantic proportions in the lodgepole pines west of the continental divide, the question on the minds of Front Range landowners was – will it spill over the divide? That issue was settled with certainty in the last two years. The next question was – will it move out of the Front Range lodgepole into ponderosa pine?

Until recently there has been some room for debate. Some experts said that there have been epidemics where the beetle stayed with the pine species that the epidemic started in. This would suggest that Front Range landowners could breathe easy. That uncertainty has delayed any sense of urgency to proactively manage Front Range ponderosa stands to reduce susceptibility. A number of CFA members have field verified that the mountain pine beetle is in all the pine species in the Front Range. Our observations seem to be substantiated by the data just released by the US Forest Service and the Colorado State Forest Service. Please review the data on the 'News and Information' page of this web site. 4,150 acres of Front Range ponderosa were infested in the 2007 beetle flight which faded and became visible to the 2008 aerial survey. To that add 10,430 acres of 5 needle pines (limber and bristlecone pine) and it should become clear that the beetles are not limited to lodgepole pine. Their rate of reproduction may be slowed as they adapt to new host tree species, but that is a temporary reprieve.

Experts have also correctly proclaimed that managed stands in Grand County were decimated by the beetle and therefore thinning would be of no benefit in Front Range ponderosa. As the Forest Service press release says *“Because of greater variability in age, size, density and species diversity in the ponderosa pine-dominated forests of the northern Front Range, the course of the mountain pine beetle epidemic and the severity of losses are difficult to predict. We suspect that tree mortality in ponderosa pines will be more variable than the losses observed in lodgepole pine forests that are west of the Continental Divide.”*

It has also come to our attention that there are web sites delivering mixed messages. First it states that “There is no way to stay ahead of the infestation of beetles on the northern Front Range given their exploding numbers...”. Then it says “Private landowners have a critical role and are responsible for managing mountain pine beetle infestations on their land.” If you believe the first part, why would a landowner expend funds or energy to ‘manage’ an infestation?

So what is a private forest landowner to do?

CFA's position is that if we do nothing, no thinning, no preventive spraying, no aggressive control measures, you can assign the highest probability to the worst possible outcome.

If we organize at the community level, promote thinning, preventive spraying, and aggressive control measures, early in the infestation of the ponderosa pines, the

probability of the worst possible outcome is reduced. Not to zero by any means. But, we feel that the impacts can be mitigated to some degree. The degree depends on how wide spread the effort is and how soon it starts. One individual doing all the right things will probably not make a dent. One community might make a difference. Several contiguous communities stand a good chance of reducing losses.

If all of us sit around wondering who will be first, the beetles win. No doubt about it.

If we all decide that we will step up and do the right thing to manage our forests, **NOW**, we may be amazed at the difference we made.

What does it mean to do “The Right Thing”? The best means to minimize tree loss is to have the best available information, and be pro-active in treating and removing beetle infested trees, before the next beetle flight which starts in mid-June. Information from the Colorado State Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Colorado State University Extension Service, is available via Resource Links within this web site.

Talk to your neighbors and get them organized for a “Community Beetle Tree Removal Project”. You may wish to reread the lead story in the Forestry Journal, Volume 25, Issue 1, [One Community’s Response to Mountain Pine Beetles](#). It is available on the ‘Forestry Journal’ page of this web site.

Need more information or have a question, please click on Board of Directors and Officers on this web site and dial a phone number, we will help you!

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