



Colorado State Forest Service
5060 Campus Delivery
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523-5060
970.491.6303; FAX 970.491.7736
<http://csfs.colostate.edu/>

NEWS

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Contact for Reporters: Ryan Lockwood

970.491.8970

ryan.lockwood@colostate.edu

Colorado State University Forestry Students Get Behind the Wheel of Heavy Logging Equipment

FORT COLLINS – This week, the Colorado State Forest Service and a Fort Collins timber products company provided students from Colorado State University’s Department of Forest, Rangeland and Watershed Stewardship a rare opportunity to get firsthand experience working with heavy logging equipment.

CSFS personnel arranged a student field day at the Morgan Timber Products jobsite in northern Fort Collins, where owner Mark Morgan allowed eight CSU students and a student from Front Range Community College to get behind the wheel of more than \$1 million worth of timber harvesting heavy equipment.

Matt Schiltz, a CSU graduate student in forest sciences, said the demonstration put on by Morgan Timber Products was both educational and very exciting to experience. “It is hugely beneficial to future foresters to experience logging equipment in this manner,” he said.

Jamie Dahl, experiential learning coordinator for the CSFS and the CSU-CSFS student liaison, emphasized that this was a very unique experience for forestry students, especially in a state like Colorado with a very small wood products industry.

“These students will talk about this trip for a long time. I think we instructors will, too,” Dahl said.

Students learned the specific uses, costs and limitations for each piece of harvesting equipment. They then were allowed a special opportunity to operate two massive log skidders and a 12-ton forwarder – a vehicle that carries felled trees to roadside landings – under close direction of Morgan and his crew.

Morgan, an alumnus of the forestry program at CSU (1973), says he is a huge supporter of the program and plans to continue to help provide CSU students with hands-on field opportunities to make sure they have the experience they need to implement good forest management practices.

Morgan’s crew is currently using the logging equipment for mountain pine beetle mitigation at the Shambhala Mountain Center, a Buddhist retreat near Red Feather Lakes. Mike Hughes, assistant district forester for the CSFS Fort Collins District, said that much of the ponderosa pine forest across Larimer County, including the forest at Shambhala, is peppered with pockets of mountain pine beetle.

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“Red and dead trees stand out across the landscape, but the most recent beetle hits, which are still green and just now starting to turn brown, are our main focus as they will lead to more dead trees this summer if they are not harvested and used now,” Hughes said.

The CSFS is a service and outreach agency of CSU’s Warner College of Natural Resources.

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