



NEWS RELEASE



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U.S. FOREST SERVICE AND COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE ANNOUNCE RESULTS OF 2011 AERIAL FOREST HEALTH SURVEY

DENVER, Jan. 31, 2012 — The U.S. Forest Service and Colorado State Forest Service today released the results of the annual aerial insect and disease [survey](#) in Colorado, which indicate that the most significant forest health concern continues to be the spread of the mountain pine beetle. Although an additional 140,000 acres of tree mortality were detected across the state, the epidemic has slowed down in many areas. The 2011 survey results bring the total infestation to 3.3 million acres in Colorado since the first signs of the outbreak in 1996.

For the second consecutive year, the Front Range, particularly Larimer County, continues to experience the highest mortality rates affecting ponderosa and lodgepole pine trees.

Despite the increase in affected acres, the three most heavily affected National Forests -- the Medicine Bow-Routt, White River and Arapaho-Roosevelt -- increased efforts to mitigate the epidemic. Forest Service crews and contractors removed dead trees along 275 miles of roads and 162 miles of trails. An additional 12,000 acres of hazardous fuels within the wildland-urban interface (WUI) and adjacent lands also were cleared of beetle-killed trees. See the full accomplishment [report](#) of the 2011 work.

“Protecting the public, our employees and critical infrastructure remains the highest priority for the U.S. Forest Service,” said Maribeth Gustafson, acting regional forester for the U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region. “Our efforts are making a big difference on the ground, but there is still a lot of work to be done.”

Other significant information learned from the survey includes spruce bark beetle and Sudden Aspen Decline (SAD) findings. The spruce bark beetle also continues to spread at higher elevations, especially in southern Colorado. Statewide, 262,000 acres were detected with tree mortality in 2011, which brings the total affected acreage since 1996 to 741,000. Sudden Aspen Decline (SAD), which was highly visible on the Western Slope for several years, now appears to have subsided. Field observers noted that many aspen stands once considered dead are showing some new sprouting, and plant pathologists and entomologists don't anticipate large-scale mortality in aspen this year as a result of SAD.

“Our actions today and in the future will shape forest conditions for the next 100 years or more,” said Jeff Jahnke, state forester and director of the Colorado State Forest Service. “Active forest management on both public and private lands can lead to healthier trees on the landscape and create the diversity necessary to reduce future large-scale insect epidemics. If we don't plan now for ongoing management of these forests, we will set the stage for another mass disturbance like the current bark beetle epidemic.”

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