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NEWS

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Firewood Sale Offers a Chance to Clean up After Pine Beetles

GOULD, Colo. – When gathering firewood this fall, Coloradans can do their part to clean up dead trees left by the mountain pine beetle epidemic.

The Colorado State Forest in north-central Colorado is selling self-serve permits for beetle-kill firewood at \$10 per cord. The low fee is designed to encourage citizens to meet their wood-burning needs by utilizing the build-up of dead wood in the State Forest, as part of an overall management plan intended in part to reduce the fuel available for an intense wildfire. Clearing dead trees also provides young, living trees more light, which encourages growth and enhances wildlife habitat. The State Forest has 28,000 acres of lodgepole pine, most of which has been impacted in recent years by mountain pine beetles.

“We’re working to clean up an area near the entrance to the State Forest,” said Brook Lee, Colorado State Forest Service assistant district forester and forest manager of the State Forest. “When people come to gather this wood, they’re doing their part to help Colorado’s forests.”

Those harvesting the dead lodgepole pine trees should come prepared with a chainsaw, personal protective equipment and a willingness to work hard. CSFS foresters already felled the beetle-kill trees in the five-acre sale area this summer, but permit holders will need to cut or “buck” the felled trees into preferred lengths and load them onto their personal truck or trailer.

“In addition to helping us clean up the area, another advantage to utilizing this wood is that people can be certain that the wood is safe to transport without spreading the beetles,” said Lee. He said that only trees no longer housing live bark beetles or their larvae have been identified for removal.

The Colorado State Forest, a state trust property that runs along the west side of the Medicine Bow Mountains, offers 71,000 acres of forest, jagged peaks and alpine lakes with miles of access trails. While responsibility for recreation management at the State Forest falls under the jurisdiction of Colorado State Parks, the CSFS is responsible for forest management.

Lee says that Coloradans who make the trip to gather firewood can take advantage of recreational opportunities the park offers, including camping, hiking, fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing. North Park and the adjacent forest are unofficially known as the moose viewing capital of Colorado, with more

than 600 resident moose that can be viewed year-round. A Colorado State Parks pass is required to recreate in the State Forest, but not to gather firewood with a permit.

Interested woodcutters can buy a \$10 permit and pick up a map of the firewood area on a self-serve basis at the CSFS office located at 59228 Highway 14, 6 miles west of Cameron Pass and adjacent to Ranger Lakes. For more information about the State Forest firewood program, call 970-723-4505.

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