

**Thinning Pinon/Juniper Forests in Southeastern CO**  
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The one-seed junipers of pinon/juniper forests of extreme southern Otero and eastern Las Animas Counties of Colorado began showing signs of stress last year and it has continued into this year. Patches of dead or dying junipers have started to show up. Upon investigation, western cedar bark beetle and flatheaded wood borer activity has been found. Due to a previous ips infestation, most pinons have been dead for several years and are beginning to fall to the ground. However, we have found some seedling regeneration of pinon this year.

With all of the dead-fall pinon and junipers beginning to decline, we may be looking a serious potential wildland fire situation. Even though this forest is not in a highly populated area, it is an extremely important player in southeastern Colorado's economy due to its agricultural base, and it also encompasses a large part of the Purgatoire river watershed.

In order to help landowners mitigate this problem, the CSFS La Junta District acquired Farm Bill funds (Land Owner Assistance for Forest Health and Protection). Under this cost-share program, four landowners were able to treat 10 acres each through forest thinning, which included assessment, marking and removal of infested trees.

Thinning these P-J forests will help mitigate wildland fires and help protect the watershed from the effects of devastating fire. It will also protect the agricultural based economy of southeastern Colorado.



Dense, overgrown pinyon/juniper forest (with mostly dead pinon). When this type of forest becomes overgrown, it becomes unhealthy and susceptible to insect and disease.



The forest opens up dramatically when thinning is done, creating a healthier forest and less potential for devastating wildland fires.