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NEWS

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Mountain Pine Beetle is Focus of May 6 Estes Park Tree Symposium

Fort Collins, Colo. — The current mountain pine beetle epidemic, which is now impacting cities and towns along the Front Range, is the focus of the third annual Estes Park Tree Symposium. The symposium will take place from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. on May 6 at the Estes Park Conference Center in the Holiday Inn in Estes Park.

Dave Leatherman, retired Colorado State Forest Service entomologist, and Tom Throgmorton, a landscaper and local businessman who is featured every Saturday on KUNC, will be the key speakers.

The purpose of the symposium is to help area residents protect their trees from threats such as mountain pine beetles, dwarf mistletoe and wildfires. All programs are free and open to the public.

Leatherman will launch the day's program at 8:30 a.m. with a presentation on "Mountain Pine Beetles — Keystone Species or Darth Vader?" His presentation will address the ecology of beetles, their history in the Estes Valley, the current epidemic and prospects for the future. He also will discuss dwarf mistletoe and other threats to area forests.

Following Leatherman's presentation at 9:45 a.m., foresters and residents of the Granby area will discuss lessons learned about the effects of the pine beetle epidemic in western Colorado.

At 11 a.m., representatives of the Estes Park Volunteer Fire Department, U.S. Forest Service, Colorado State Forest Service and Rocky Mountain National Park will discuss their agencies' policies for fighting wildfires and the effect of beetle-killed trees on fire behavior.

Throgmorton will open the afternoon session at 1:30 p.m. with a presentation on "High Country Landscaping," which will cover such topics as landscape design, xeriscape planting, plant selection and plant care.

At 2:45 p.m., a panel composed of representatives from Rocky Mountain National Park, Larimer County, the town of Estes Park and the U.S. Forest Service will discuss their agencies' policies for dealing with mountain pine beetles.

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The symposium concludes with a second presentation by Leatherman on the natural history of ponderosa pine, which will cover such topics as the botany of ponderosa pine, and the birds, mammals and other plants associated with this important forest type.

This year's symposium will feature informational displays and the opportunity to meet with representatives from Beetle Busters, the local tree inspection program in Estes Park. Local fire mitigation specialists and Estes Park employees responsible for tree code enforcement and operating the air-curtain burner, which is used to dispose of beetle-infested trees, also will be available to discuss their programs.

In addition, area businesses, including tree sprayers, tree services, nurseries, and other companies will display their services and products.

The symposium was organized by the Estes Park Tree Board, Colorado State Forest Service and Town of Estes Park. For more information about the symposium, contact Diana Selby, Colorado State Forest Service, at 970.491.8839 or diana.selby@colostate.edu.

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