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NEWS

For Immediate Release
February 22, 2012

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Report Highlights Need to Address Bark Beetle Aftermath on Private Land

DENVER – According to the Colorado State Forester, the aftermath of the mountain pine beetle epidemic will require as much attention as the outbreak itself – including attention from private landowners.

Jeff Jahnke, state forester and director of the Colorado State Forest Service, spoke this morning at the annual Joint Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee Hearing at the State Capitol. He said that although active mountain pine beetle infestations impacted fewer acres in Colorado last year than in any year since 2006, private landowners and public land managers now must deal with the real risk of millions of dead trees falling, and capitalize on the chance to prepare regenerating forests to be healthier than their predecessors.

“The risk of falling trees remains a real concern to life and property on private land,” Jahnke said. “Likewise, addressing general forest health in the wake of a bark beetle epidemic is a responsibility shared by public land managers and private landowners.”

The *2011 Report on the Health of Colorado’s Forests*, released today by the Colorado State Forest Service at the Joint Ag Committee hearing, provides a comprehensive overview of forest insect and disease concerns in the state. The 11th annual report indicates that all-species tree mortality from mountain pine beetles has declined for the third consecutive year, but that the epidemic continues to expand in ponderosa and lodgepole pine forests along the northern Front Range.

“This report, along with the Colorado Forest Action Plan that was developed in 2009-2010, will help guide forest management decisions today, and provide an opportunity to stimulate discussion about what we want our future forests to look like,” Jahnke said.

The 2011 report also includes a special section on the riparian forests of the Eastern Plains, and describes how spruce beetles continue to impact mature Engelmann spruce forests in high-elevation areas of Colorado – impacting 262,000 acres last year. The largest outbreak, centered in the San Juan Mountains and upper Rio Grande Basin, previously was limited to remote public lands. Yet the beetles now pose a threat to spruce forests on private land.

“This infestation has now reached areas visible from the highway,” said Joe Duda, Forest Management Division supervisor for the CSFS.

To view the entire 2011 forest health report, go to csfs.colostate.edu.