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NEWS

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Meeting Unites Forestry Groups, Private Citizens to Mitigate Effects of Bark Beetles

BELLVUE, Colo. – The Larimer County Beetle Busters, a group of professional foresters, tree farmers, forest landowners and private citizens concerned about the impacts of mountain pine beetle, held their inaugural meeting Sept. 25 at Ward Mountain Ranch northwest of Fort Collins. The purpose of the meeting was to provide reliable information to an initial group of concerned citizens, who then are encouraged to reach out to private landowners to help them control pine beetle infestations in their forests.

Boyd Lebeda, Colorado State Forest Service Fort Collins District forester, was one of four CSFS foresters who taught meeting participants about mountain pine beetles and how to identify and confirm their presence under the bark of pine trees. Numerous forestry contractors also were at the meeting to demonstrate logging equipment capabilities and utilization of wood obtained from forest management work.

“We were very impressed by the attendance Saturday,” Lebeda said. “Our goal was to make sure that those who showed up walked away with a basic knowledge about mountain pine beetles and what can be done to protect forests from them, as well as the motivation to work with neighbors to mitigate the effects of the beetles.”

Also in attendance were Larimer County Commissioner Steve Johnson (R), who is a former Republican state senator, and State Reps. John Kefalas (D) and Randy Fischer (D), both of Fort Collins. Although the meeting attracted approximately 100 aware citizens from the Wyoming border to Douglas County, organizer and Colorado Tree Farmers Outreach and Education Chair Wes Rutt said the event could not be considered an unqualified success.

“We’re thrilled that we had so many people attend, but we don’t want anyone to see this as a one-time effort,” Rutt said. “We’re going to need this initial group to get a lot more people involved to effectively reduce beetle risks in Larimer County.”

The Larimer County Beetle Buster Program was developed over the past six months through a partnership between the Colorado State Forest Service, Larimer County, Larimer County Tree Farmers and the Colorado Forestry Association. Rutt says the intent of the program is not so much to stop the spread of the beetles, but to create healthier forests better able to withstand future insect epidemics and to mitigate potential damage from destructive wildfires in the beetles’ aftermath.

Lebeda said the CSFS strongly encourages private landowners to take an active role in managing their forests to make them more resilient and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. The two recent fires on the Front Range demonstrated how Colorado wildfires can threaten semi-urban areas.

Rutt said that the efforts of these first 100 Beetle Busters represents a good start, but it will take a much larger effort to address bark beetle impacts throughout Larimer County's forests.

"We need your help, too," he said.

Visit csfs.colostate.edu or [www.treefarmer.com/Larimer County Beetle Busters.html](http://www.treefarmer.com/Larimer%20County%20Beetle%20Busters.html) for more information about bark beetles and the Beetle Buster program.

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