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# NEWS

## **For Immediate Release**

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## **Interim State Forester Joe Duda Presented Safety Award from USDA Forest Service**

**FORT COLLINS, Colo.** – Joe Duda, interim state forester with the Colorado State Forest Service, this week was presented the 2013 Forest Health Protection Aviation Safety Award from the USDA Forest Service for “outstanding contributions to aviation safety and support to forest health programs.” Only one candidate from state and federal organizations involved in national USFS aerial survey programs receives the award each year.

The award is given for promoting a positive aviation safety culture, conducting forest health activities that directly benefit the resource, and for building efficiencies among federal and state partners. James Hubbard, deputy chief of the USFS State and Private Forestry Program, presented the award to Duda yesterday in Fort Collins.

“Joe continually places safety as the highest priority and has substantially contributed to developing a positive, effective and long-term cooperative forest health relationship,” said Hubbard.

For the past several years, Duda has participated in at least one aerial detection survey flight annually and in numerous meetings and trainings. He says that being a program lead with personal involvement in the flights provides him an opportunity to be aware of the unique challenges aerial observers face, and ensure that everyone involved is promoting a safe and effective work environment.

The USFS Forest Health Protection Program established the award to commemorate the aerial survey crew of aircraft N30266 – Rodney Whiteman, Dan Snider and Patrick Jessup – lost on a 2010 aerial detection flight in Pennsylvania.

Each year, observers with the CSFS and USFS together conduct an aerial survey to map insect and disease activity in forested areas of Colorado. The survey, which involves flying from July through September, provides a snapshot of landscape-level forest conditions that may be monitored and addressed more closely by on-the-ground assessments.

“It’s easy to work with our partners in the USFS Forest Health Protection Program, who are passionate and dedicated,” Duda said. “The real heroes are the folks frequently going up in the aircraft and conducting the aerially surveys. Their safety is our top priority.”

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