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NEWS

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Private landowner participation helps foresters monitor statewide forest health

FORT COLLINS, Colo. – This month, private forest landowners around the state will be receiving letters from the Colorado State Forest Service to request property access to collect essential data about forest health conditions in Colorado. The requests are part of the National Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program – the principal source of information used to assess the status of America’s forests.

Colorado is the first state in the Rocky Mountain Region where leadership of the FIA process has been assumed by a state agency. Here the FIA Program is funded by the USDA Forest Service and conducted on the ground by CSFS personnel. Plots on all land ownership types around the state are randomly selected for possible sampling of current forest health conditions.

“By allowing us access to sample the forest cover on their land, private landowners can help us better understand statewide forest health conditions and make the best possible forest management decisions in the future,” said Aaron Rector, an FIA inventory forester for the CSFS. “We thank those landowners who have replied to our access requests, and especially those who have continued to support our project by allowing us access to their property.”

The program provides data on forest cover, tree species composition, wood volume, tree health and other factors, and provides baseline information to measure changes over time.

In Colorado, 4,500 permanent forest inventory plots have been established statewide; approximately 10 percent of these two-and-a-half-acre plots are examined annually. All sampling is done on foot, using completely non-destructive sampling methods, and data are normally collected in a single day. Landowner information is held confidential and not included in the FIA database.

In 2011, the first 10-year cycle of forest inventory data across Colorado was completed.

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