



NEWS RELEASE



EMBARGOED: 9:00 a.m., Jan. 22, 2010

USDA Forest Service

Rocky Mountain Region

740 Simms Street Golden, CO 80401

Contact: Janelle Smith, 303-275-5359 or 720-289-7587

Colorado State Forest Service

3843 Laporte Avenue

Fort Collins, CO 80523

Contact: Ryan Lockwood, 970-491-8970

US FOREST SERVICE AND COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE ANNOUNCE RESULTS OF FOREST HEALTH SURVEY

DENVER, Jan. 22, 2010 — The US Forest Service and Colorado State Forest Service announced the results of the 2009 forest health annual aerial survey today. Survey results reveal that the bark beetle infestation affected about 524,000 new acres in 2009, bringing the total number of acres of infestation up to 3.6 million since the first signs of outbreak in 1996.

Research indicates that lodgepole pine trees infested by mountain pine beetle will begin to fall three to five years after they die. Large pockets of downed trees have been observed from the air and ground. The blow downs were likely caused by strong winds.

“The threat of falling dead trees has created an emergency situation for which we are responding at a national level,” said Rick Cables, Rocky Mountain Regional Forester for the US Forest Service. “For the next two years, we are working with a national incident management organization to approach our efforts across the entire landscape utilizing all of the tools available.”

In addition to legislation introduced and passed by Colorado’s state and federal legislators directing much-needed funding over the last few years, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced an additional \$40 million to bolster the Rocky Mountain Region’s efforts this year.

“Forest health has been a priority for my administration and we are extremely grateful for the \$40 million that has been allocated to the Rocky Mountain Region for hazard tree removal,” Gov. Bill Ritter Jr. said. “It’s important to understand that addressing the public safety risks caused by the beetles will take a lot of resources and many years of hard work. But it’s something we simply have to do.”

“The magnitude of the impacts from the bark beetle epidemic is staggering, and the Colorado State Forest Service will continue to focus on management efforts that help mitigate the impacts to communities, infrastructure, water supplies and natural resources,” said Jeff Jahnke, state forester and director of the Colorado State Forest Service. “We are fortunate and thankful to have the support of the Colorado Congressional Delegation, Colorado General Assembly and Gov. Bill Ritter as we continue to address this critical forestry issue in our state.”

Other forest health concerns presented today include the spruce beetle infestation that has reached an epidemic level of about half a million acres, mostly in southern Colorado. The aspen decline situation has stabilized. All indications are that this condition peaked in 2008 and expanded very little over the past year.