

NEWS RELEASE

Colorado State Forest Service
U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region



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Forestry Agencies Release 2015 Aerial Survey Results for Colorado

GOLDEN, Colo., Jan. 28, 2016 – Today, the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Rocky Mountain Region, released the 2015 forest health aerial survey results for Colorado.

Every year the USFS and CSFS work together to aerially monitor forest health conditions on millions of forested acres across the state. Aerial survey observations of tree-damaging insects and diseases native to Colorado's forests are highlighted below.

2015 Aerial Survey Highlights

- Spruce beetle outbreaks caused widespread tree mortality for the fourth consecutive year.
 - Spruce beetle populations have expanded, impacting higher-elevation stands of Engelmann spruce.
 - In 2015, spruce beetle infestations were detected on 409,000 acres across the state, expanding onto 182,000 acres of previously unaffected forests.
 - Since 1996, spruce beetle outbreaks have caused varying degrees of tree mortality on more than 1.5 million acres in Colorado.
 - Blowdown events, combined with long-term drought stress, warmer temperatures and extensive amounts of older, dense spruce, have contributed to this ongoing epidemic.
- Outbreaks of two defoliators of conifer trees – western spruce budworm and Douglas-fir tussock moth – also expanded in 2015.
 - The area impacted by western spruce budworm, Colorado's most widespread forest defoliator, increased from 178,000 acres in 2014 to approximately 312,000 acres in 2015. This insect typically feeds on developing buds and new needles of fir, Douglas-fir and spruce in southern Colorado.
 - Douglas-fir tussock moth caterpillars consumed needles on Douglas-fir, white fir and spruce on approximately 26,000 acres along Colorado's Front Range. Impacts were observed primarily in the South Platte River Basin and areas just west of Colorado Springs. Ground surveys have documented the presence of a naturally occurring virus among Douglas-fir tussock moth caterpillars, which has historically been a key indicator of imminent population collapse.
 - Trees weakened by these defoliators may become susceptible to Douglas-fir beetle, which can kill impacted trees.
- Mountain pine beetle activity has subsided and remains low, with 5,000 acres affected statewide. The epidemic has ended in many areas of Colorado as mature pine trees have been depleted in the core outbreak areas.

"The lesson we can take away from the extensive insect and disease damage we've seen in Colorado over the past two decades is the need for proactively taking care of our forests," said Mike Lester, State Forester and Director of the Colorado State Forest Service. "The best time to take actions to address long-term forest health is before a major outbreak starts, and not after."

Agency Highlights

In 2015, the CSFS treated more than 17,000 acres in Colorado, predominantly on private and state lands, as part of forest management and wildfire mitigation efforts.

The CSFS is committed to providing timely, relevant forestry information and education to the citizens of Colorado to achieve resilient forests and communities. CSFS Quick Guides on spruce beetle and Douglas-fir tussock moth are available free online at www.csfs.colostate.edu/csfspublications. Another guide on Douglas-fir beetle will be available the first week of February.

The USFS is committed to ecological restoration, which includes maintaining and restoring healthy and diverse landscapes, promoting resilience in the face of climate change and other stressors, reducing the risk to communities and natural resources from wildfire, and sustaining diverse wildlife habitat. Along with partners, the USFS is investing in several projects to improve forest health.

“Although forests in Colorado have experienced a series of insect infestations, we continue to invest in projects with local and industry partners, ahead of and behind the infestations, to improve forest health,” said Dan Jirón, Regional Forester for the Rocky Mountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service.

Last year in Colorado the USFS treated approximately 51,020 acres through timber sales, thinning and prescribed fire. A total of 268,000 CCF (hundred cubic feet) of timber was sold, which equates to the framing lumber and other wood products used to build 3,350 homes.

Project Highlights

- One [Chief's Joint Landscape Restoration Project](#) on the San Juan National Forest, which is a joint program with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).
- Two [Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program \(CFLRP\) projects](#), on the Front Range and Uncompahgre Plateau.
- Four long-term stewardship contracts are in place and secure a steady stream of work and products to support local mills and bioenergy facilities.
- Collaborative planning and cost sharing with partners for restoration work in high-priority, mutually beneficial areas.
- The [Spruce Beetle Epidemic and Aspen Decline Management Response](#) on the Grand Mesa Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest (GMUG). The GMUG has approximately 223,000 cumulative acres of spruce beetle mortality and 229,000 acres of affected aspen from the past decade.

Together, the CSFS and the USFS are using other tools such as the [Good Neighbor Authority](#) to perform watershed restoration and forest management services on National Forest System lands. A Master Good Neighbor Agreement, signed by both agencies last November, fosters a collaborative approach and leverages state resources to accomplish work across land ownership boundaries onto National Forest System lands. Both agencies are working to identify eligible projects to protect water supplies, manage insect infestations, reduce wildfire risk and meet other forest management objectives.

For the 2015 Aerial Detection Survey highlights and maps, visit:
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/USFSR2ForestHealth>.

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The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) provides technical forestry assistance, wildfire mitigation expertise and outreach and education to help landowners and communities achieve their forest management goals. The CSFS is a service and outreach agency of

the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University and provides staffing for the Division of Forestry within the Colorado Department of Natural Resources. For more information, visit www.csfs.colostate.edu.

The mission of the U.S. Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world. Public lands the Forest Service manages contribute more than \$13 billion to the economy each year through visitor spending alone. Those same lands provide 20 percent of the nation's clean water supply, a value estimated at \$27 billion per year. The agency has either a direct or indirect role in stewardship of about 80 percent of the 850 million forested acres within the U.S., of which 100 million acres are urban forests where most Americans live. For more information on forest health conditions in the USFS Rocky Mountain Region, visit <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/r2/forest-grasslandhealth>.