



NEWS RELEASE

Contact for Reporters:

Ryan Lockwood
970.491.8970 or 970.491.6303
ryan.lockwood@colostate.edu
csfs.colostate.edu

Report Highlights Mountain, Urban Forest Health Concerns in Colorado

FORT COLLINS, Colo. – Feb. 17, 2016 – Millions of acres of Colorado’s native forestlands have been impacted by bark beetles in the past two decades, and now an exotic tree pest – the emerald ash borer (EAB) – is threatening the state’s planted urban forests. The potential economic impacts of EAB in the Metro Denver area alone could be as high as \$82 million annually, based on a loss of services provided by the canopy of existing ash trees susceptible to the pest.

The *2015 Report on the Health of Colorado’s Forests*, distributed today by the Colorado State Forest Service at the annual Joint Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee Hearing at the State Capitol, details forest health challenges and solutions around the state. The theme of this year’s report is “15 Years of Change,” featuring a broad look at the decade-and-a-half the CSFS has produced these reports on the state of Colorado’s forests, as well as an overview of the most current issues.

“Threats to Colorado’s forests aren’t just located high in the mountains. They’re in our communities, in our largest cities, on our Eastern Plains, and everywhere that we benefit from trees,” said Mike Lester, State Forester and Director of the CSFS. “The actions we take now will set the stage for our future forests and the benefits they provide.”

Highlights of information in this year’s report include:

- An estimated 15 percent or more of Colorado’s urban and community trees are ash, and susceptible to infestation by the highly destructive EAB.
- Spruce beetle infestations have now impacted more than 1.5 million acres across Colorado, while mountain pine beetle infestations remain at low levels following a 3.4 million-acre, two-decade long outbreak.
- Healthy forested watersheds are key to providing clean water, and nearly 64 million people obtain drinking water derived from Western forests.
- Colorado’s wildland-urban interface (WUI) population grew from 980,000 people in 2000 to more than 2 million people in 2012, but the state boasts 128 Firewise Communities/USA – ranking second in the nation.
- More than \$8 million in state funding, combined with matching funds, has allowed for the treatment of 18,000 forest acres in Colorado since 2007.
- More than 90 percent of wood-based products Coloradans use are imported.

Each year, Colorado forest health reports provide information to the Colorado General Assembly and residents of Colorado about the health and condition of forests across the state, including recent data, figures and maps. Information for the reports is derived from an annual aerial forest health survey by

the CSFS and the Rocky Mountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service, as well as field inspections, CSFS contacts with forest landowners and special surveys.

Copies of the 2015 report are available at all CSFS district offices and at <http://csfs.colostate.edu>.

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.