



# Colorado State Forest Service

## Salida District Update

From the Salida and Gunnison Offices  
March 22, 2016

### Message from the CSFS Salida District

Change is a constant in the forests where we have the privilege to work. It keeps us on our toes, sometimes makes us scratch our heads, and provides a common thread for interaction with landowners and a mix of organizations as we work toward healthier forests.

In 2013, the Salida District of the CSFS was combined with the Gunnison District, with the latter now officially considered a field office. Both offices remain staffed and operational to better serve Hinsdale, Gunnison, Chaffee and Lake Counties. Although there are two physical offices, we work cohesively as one team.



*A fire-sculpted snag against a backdrop of green trees illustrates change in a lodgepole pine forest. Photo: Kathryn Hardgrave*

Because of this team approach, you may meet or interact with personnel from both offices. In order for you to be more familiar with the combined district workforce, a brief description of who works where, and who leads what efforts follows. Although the work is divided up for organizational purposes, we are all here to carry out the CSFS mission of achieving “stewardship of Colorado’s diverse forest environments for the benefit of present and future generations.” We are all facilitators, educators, participants, doers.

More information about the CSFS and the Salida District specifically is available on the CSFS website at [www.csfs.colostate.edu](http://www.csfs.colostate.edu).

### Salida District Office Focuses on Chaffee, Lake Counties

*Damon Lange, District Forester*, is the manager of district operations and divides his time working out of both the Salida and Gunnison offices. He supervises district staff, manages the wildfire mitigation program in Chaffee and Lake counties, and works with various watershed groups and cooperators on the district.

*Kathryn Hardgrave, Assistant District Forester*, helps landowners care for their forested land, whether looking at a sick tree, writing a stewardship plan, selecting unhealthy trees to cut, or administering a timber sale. She works with volunteers and city/town personnel that care for trees in parks and along streets. She also is responsible for forest management on State Trust Lands.

**The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) mission is to achieve stewardship of Colorado’s diverse forest environments for the benefit of present and future generations.**

The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) is a service and outreach agency of the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University.

*Jeff McGinnis, Seasonal Forestry Aide*, administers and implements the wildfire assessment program in Chaffee County. He is the lead chainsaw instructor for the district. He also manages wintertime fuels mitigation projects, which involve a fee-based fuels reduction service (thinning, pruning, chipping trees) available to landowners.

*Beth Anderson, Administrative Assistant*, passed away in March 2015, leaving a void at the Salida office that will not be filled. Beth greeted people on the phone and at the front desk in Salida for 23 years.



*Salida Office personnel (from left) Jeff McGinnis, Damon Lange and Kathryn Hardgrave.*

## **Gunnison Office Focuses on Gunnison, Hinsdale Counties**

*Sam Pankratz, Assistant District Forester*, oversees forest management on ranches and large tracts of private land, offers community forestry assistance for local communities, and runs the field office's greenhouse. Sam also assists the Ute Mountain Ute tribe in management of tribally owned ranches. Sam is the current chair of the Society of American Foresters, Ute Chapter.

*Ann Wood, Administrative Assistant*, tracks budgets, handles the flow of money, maintains records, supervises hourly staff as needed, and helps sustain a functioning and healthy work environment for both offices. Ann also helps maintain and operate Gunnison's seedling tree greenhouse/shadehouse operation and stays abreast of facility maintenance needs.

*Ray Wood, Greenhouse Aide and Facility Maintenance (Part-Time)*, happily helps in all areas of the greenhouse/shadehouse operation, from cleaning and filling seedling containers with soil and planting seeds, to improving or maintaining the mechanical systems. Ray is the behind the scene "jack of all trades" who keeps the buildings tidy and functioning, and keeps the grounds in order.

*J.T. Shaver, Seasonal Forester* from April 2015 to December 2015, coordinated with the West Region Wildfire Council to help Gunnison County landowners implement defensible space projects within their forested communities. He helped implement Douglas-fir beetle control and assisted with sick tree calls, forest management projects, community forestry, natural resource education and the greenhouse operations.



*Gunnison Office personnel (from left) Ann Wood, Ray Wood, J.T. Shaver and Sam Pankratz.*

## 2015 Highlights

The CSFS Salida District is grateful to work with many people who share our passion for healthy trees and forests. Concerned, caring citizens make all the difference in what we can accomplish collectively. The following summaries offer a taste of what kept us busy in 2015:

### *Gunnison Greenhouse Assumes Larger Role in Statewide Conservation Seedling Program*

The year 2015 saw our relationship with the CSFS Nursery staff in Fort Collins grow even stronger as all 9,000 aspen seedlings grown in the Gunnison greenhouse were purchased by the nursery and are now available for sale in a multi-state distribution area.

This beneficial partnership is valuable to the clientele, the CSFS Nursery and the Gunnison greenhouse operation. Thanks to Josh Stolz and his crew at the CSFS Nursery; we anticipate this will be a long-lasting collaborative effort. (Check out the new CSFS video on the Gunnison greenhouse at <http://csfs.colostate.edu/videos>)



*An excellent crop of aspen seedlings came up in 2015. Photo: Ann Wood*

### *Trappers Crossing Fuels Reduction Project*

Four years in the making, with plenty of challenges along the way, the roadside thinning in Trappers Crossing, a subdivision outside Crested Butte, was completed in 2015. The project involved approval and coordination from 15 landowners to thin dense forest within 100 feet of the road centerline on the main ingress/egress route, to make the route safer for evacuees and emergency services in the event of a wildfire. The three-phase project orchestrated by Sam resulted in 67 acres thinned along four miles of road – a good step forward in addressing wildfire hazards associated with the dense forest.



*Trappers Crossing roadside thinning operations reduced the amount of available fuel for wildfire and even improved driver safety. Photo: Sam Pankratz*

### *Crystal Creek Fuels Reduction Project*

In the fall of 2015, J.T. was given permission by the Crystal Creek Properties manager to prepare an 11.5-acre fuels mitigation project to lessen wildfire risk to a collection of properties located in Taylor Canyon, northeast of Gunnison. The project includes one fuelbreak, two thinning units and one defensible space. The Crystal Creek Fuel Mitigation Project is set to be completed in the summer of 2016.

### *Town of Buena Vista Understands the Importance of Trees*

Congratulations to Buena Vista for planting more than 100 trees in 2015! Most of the planted trees were part of a road improvement project. The town is earnestly trying to expand its palette of tree species. Seven types of trees new to Buena Vista were part of the 2015 planting: Kentucky coffeetree, bur oak, northern catalpa, 'Valley Forge' elm, 'David' elm, 'New Horizon' elm, and 'Discovery' elm. As a separate activity, Kathryn and two members of the tree board visited

all the ash trees in town to create a baseline for future emerald ash borer (EAB) monitoring.



*Newly planted trees along East Main Street, Buena Vista.  
Photo: Phillip Puckett, Buena Vista Town Trustee*

### *Improvements to Gunnison Office*

The Gunnison Field Office, also known as the Mountain Meadow Research Center, received a new, energy-efficient roof in 2015, removing a roof that had served its purpose for longer than anyone can remember. Tired of the muddy quagmire during the spring thaw, the driveway and back parking lot also have been re-engineered to drain runoff water better. Completion is expected in 2016.

## **What's Ahead in 2016**

### *New Two-Year Forester in Gunnison*

As a district, we are delighted to announce that J.T. Shaver competed successfully for the new two-year forester position at the Gunnison Field Office. We are excited to have two foresters based out of Gunnison once again.

J.T. is a 2014 graduate of Colorado State University, with a degree in forest management. As a year-round forester, J.T. will lead CSFS fire mitigation efforts on private land in Gunnison County, triage sick trees, and be in charge of the local conservation seedling program. He began his new role in February 2016.

Please congratulate and welcome J.T. the next time you see him!

### *Bark Beetle Populations Continue to Rise*

The 2015 aerial forest health survey conducted cooperatively by the CSFS and the U.S. Forest Service indicates that mortality to Engelmann spruce trees from spruce beetle (*Dendroctonus rufipennis*) continues to climb in the Salida District, and now has a visible presence in all four of the district's counties. Engelmann spruce trees are a part of the high-elevation forest above 9,000 feet. The CSFS Spruce Beetle Quick Guide is available at our offices and online at <http://csfs.colostate.edu/media/sites/22/2014/02/Spruce-Beetle-QuickGuide-FM2014-1.pdf>



*A Douglas-fir tree succumbing to Douglas-fir beetle fades to an orange color. Photo: Sam Pankratz*

The Douglas-fir beetle (*Dendroctonus pseudotsugae*) continues to be an issue of concern for the Gunnison Field Office. Outbreaks can be expected during extended periods of below-normal precipitation, with mature Douglas-fir trees the main target of attack. In response, the field office has been working with landowners to incorporate forest management techniques to increase stand resiliency. In addition

to sound forest management, Methylcyclohexanone (MCH) pheromone packets have proven effective at deterring attacks to Douglas-fir trees, mimicking natural “no vacancy” pheromones emitted by beetles after infesting live trees. Contact the Gunnison Field Office for more information on the use of MCH, and view our Douglas-fir beetle publication online at <http://csfs.colostate.edu/media/sites/22/2016/01/Douglas-Fir-Beetle-QuickGuide2016.pdf>.

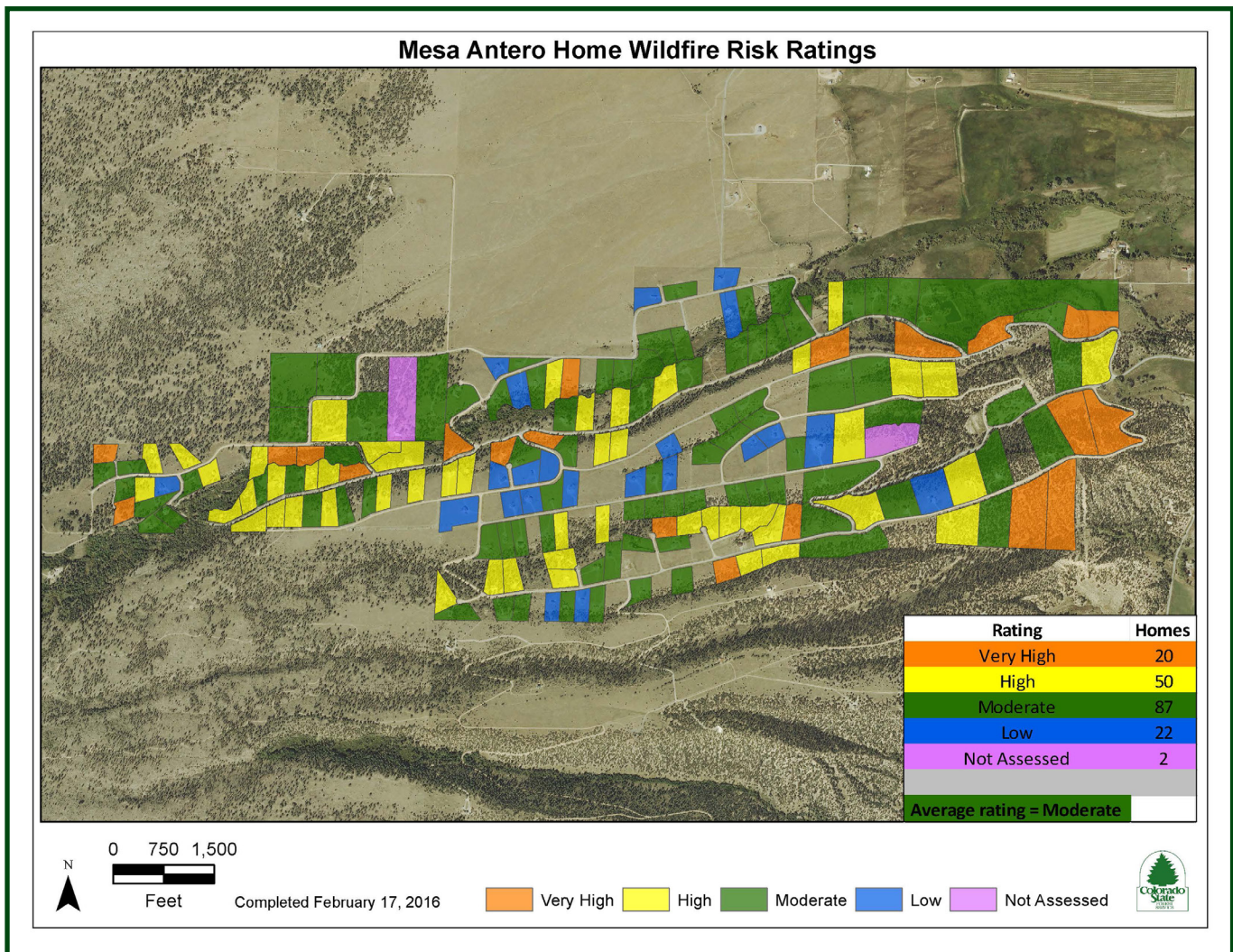
As if the beetles aren't enough to cope with, Douglas-fir trees also must contend with a rise in the western spruce budworm (*Choristoneura occidentalis* Freeman) population throughout the district. True to their name, budworms eat new tree buds, but the caterpillar actually does more damage to Douglas-fir than spruce. By August, branch tips of affected trees, particularly

near the tree top, are red-brown in color and dead. <http://static.colostate.edu/client-files/csfs/pdfs/05543.pdf>

*Wildfire Mitigation Assessment Program Raises Participant Awareness*

Jeff and Damon are leading efforts to assess the susceptibility of homes to wildfire in a handful of Chaffee County subdivisions. The rating for each home is illustrated on a subdivision map and shared with the participants, the fire protection districts and other emergency responders, and is posted on the CSFS website.

In Lake County, efforts are underway to hire a coordinator to lead a similar wildfire home assessment program. Damon and Pete Barry, CSFS GIS specialist,



*Example of a map depicting the wildfire risk to homes. (ArcMap product data collected by Jeff McGinnis, map created by Pete Barry, CSFS)*

will assist Lake County Fire and Rescue with coordinator training.

### *Ramping Up Forest Stewardship on the Pinecrest Ranch*

Sam is very much looking forward to the upcoming forest management efforts on Ute Mountain Ute tribal lands in Gunnison County in 2016. Proposed projects on the Pinecrest Ranch include reduction of the Douglas-fir beetle population and a riparian restoration planting of willows along Pine Creek.

## **In Closing**

Over the years, we have built strong working relationships, as well as friendships, with landowners and partners in numerous organizations. As natural resource professionals, we recognize that improving forest health needs to happen at a large scale, which means we all have a part to play to be successful.

We are proud to be your resource for tree health advice, conservation plantings, fire preparedness and long-term forest care on private, municipal and State Trust lands. Landowners are the best promoters of



*The Pinecrest Ranch is a large, working ranch providing superb wildlife habitat on nearly 20,000 acres. Photo: Sam Pankratz*

forest stewardship. Please share with your neighbors the beneficial changes you've witnessed as you care for the forestland on your property. The coming year holds many opportunities for all of us, and we look forward to working with you.

## **For More Information:**

*If you have any questions, would like assistance with forestry-related issues, or want to work together on a particular project, please contact us. Because we are often in the woods, we recommend calling the office ahead of an unscheduled office visit to make sure one of us is in the office.*

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*The West Elk Wilderness, located west of Gunnison, provides premiere wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities in a pristine mountain setting. Photo: Sam Pankratz*