

FOOTHILLS OBSERVER

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A forest stewardship and wildfire mitigation newsletter for the rural landowner, provided by Fremont County Firewise

Fall 2005

Beetles Attack Union Pass

The residents of Union Pass and other areas in the Dubois region are under attack. Bark beetles are infesting trees at an alarming rate and multiple species are at risk. The lower elevations are being hit by the Douglas-fir beetle while the higher elevations are being decimated by the mountain pine beetle (MPB). This should be a cause to worry for anyone who owns property in the area, and elsewhere, who like the presence of trees on their land.

The past couple of weeks have been a disaster for many trees on Union Pass. We began hearing from landowners in the lower Porcupine subdivision that they were losing their majestic Douglas-firs and they were wonder-

ing why. Upon inspection we realized that the beetle numbers were higher than originally thought. Since then we have been flooded with calls from concerned landowners who want to protect their investments.

Recently we have been getting calls from residents in the upper subdivisions on Union Pass concerning the losses of their lodgepole pines. This is the result of the explosion of MPB populations in the area. Although we have been receiving calls, the number of landowners that are aware of the problem and actively attempting to fight back is very small.

In order for the Union Pass area to not be completely decimated,

it is the responsibility of the landowners to look for signs of beetles on their properties and attempt to get their neighbors

involved as well. This is a REAL epidemic and if nothing is done to help slow the spread of the beetles, thousands of trees will die.

This leads to many different problems including increasing the already high risk of wildfire. The last thing that Union Pass needs is something to make the fire danger even higher, but that is exactly what is happening.

The best way to protect your land is to become knowledgeable about the beetles and learn first hand what to look for. The "Bugs and Crud" section of this newsletter focuses on the bark beetles and how to identify and manage an infestation.

The Wyoming State Forestry Division and Fremont County Firewise are holding an informative meeting to teach landowners what to look for and what you can do to help protect your property. We will be

having real examples of beetles and trees that have the symptoms of an infestation. This is the best chance to see and learn what you are up against and what you can do to fight back. The meeting is going to be held at the Dennison Lodge at the Headwaters Convention Center in Dubois on September 10th at 9:00 a.m. Refreshments will be provided and the meeting is free to all interested parties.

Informative Meeting September 10th at 9:00 am. Dennison Lodge at the Headwaters Center in Dubois.

Contact Jeff Swanson at 307-857-3030 for more info.



Mountain Pine Beetle

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Fremont County Adopts Wildfire Mitigation Plan

“Maintaining private property rights will continue to be one of the guiding principles of this plan’s implementation.”

Trying to stay ahead of Mother Nature, Fremont County has recently adopted a Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Wildfire Mitigation Plan often times referred to as a Community Wildfire Protection Plan or CWPP. With the adoption of this plan, Fremont County remains on the cutting edge of county involvement dealing with wildfire and safety.

The plan or CWPP was developed by the Fremont County Wildland-Urban Interface Mitigation Planning Committee in cooperation with Northwest Management of Moscow, Idaho. The plan was the result of analyses, cooperation, and collaboration of many different agencies.

Assessments of current and historical conditions of the vegetation, climate, fire occurrence, as well as community surveys were used to define areas of high risk with the goal of reducing potential losses of people, structures, infrastructure, and unique ecosystems in Fremont County.

With the implementation of the CWPP, Fremont County will be able to acquire different grant monies that are not available unless a FEMA

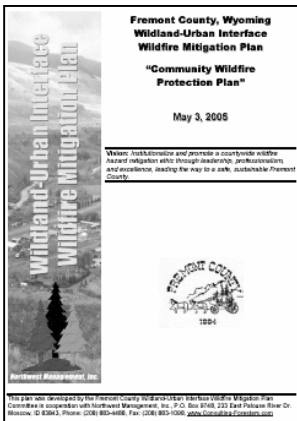
(Federal Emergency Management Agency) approved mitigation plan is already in place. This will allow the county, to not only continue, but to improve upon many of the existing programs currently dealing with WUI issues.

The plan took a look at all communities in Fremont County and rated them using different environmental factors dealing with wildfire potential. Using these ratings many communities were listed as having a high wildfire potential that are not listed in the Federal Register of "at risk" communities. This will allow these communities to be more able to acquire and use cost-share money that was previously unavailable to them. Most of these communities are situated on rangelands or river bottoms and are at a relatively high risk of suffering a wildfire.

Along with cost-share monies that allow homeowners to create defensible space, new education programs and public awareness campaigns will become more available. Other management tools such as building codes, access improvements, emergency response enhancement

and the development of permanent WUI committees could also be implemented. Maintaining private property rights will continue to be one of the guiding principles of this plan’s implementation.

One of the most impressive portions of the plan is the list of agencies and organizations that participated in the planning process. This list included: the Fremont County Commissioners; Fremont County Emergency Services; Wyoming State Forestry Division; Wind River Indian Reservation; USDI Bureau of Land Management; USDI Bureau of Indian Affairs; USDA Forest Service; USDI Fish and Wildlife Service; Jeffery City, Lander, Riverton, Dubois and Fremont County Fire Protection Districts and Departments; and many others. With this amount of collaboration, the plan is surely a comprehensive compilation of ideas that will guide WUI practices in Fremont County well into the future.



The CWPP was completed in May and has been adopted by all pertinent municipalities and organizations

Hunting Season Nears

Temperatures continue to hit high marks during the daytime hours and the fire danger remains high. Residents need to be aware that as hunting season nears, more and more people are going to be camping in the woods in Fremont County.

Caution needs to be taken by all to prevent wildfires from ravaging our forests and rangelands. The Fremont

County Volunteer Fire Departments have been busy putting grass fires out across the county. The grass is still extremely dry and tall, this leads to easy ignition and the ability to carry flames with very little wind.

Extra caution need to be taken when camping and driving in the woods this hunting season. Catalytic converters are notorious grass fire igniters, so be careful when parking a

hot vehicle on the side of the road. Campfires can also be dangerous. Please take steps to ensure that the fire is contained and small enough that you can easily put it out should you need to. Possibly the most important step in camping is to make sure that the campfire is 'dead out' before leaving it unattended. This means that you can feel no heat when your hand is placed in the pit.



With care from everyone we can have a safe and successful hunting season.

“Bugs and Crud”

A closer look at insects and diseases that may affect your trees

Mountain Pine Beetle *Dendroctonus ponderosae* Hopkins

Hosts: lodgepole, ponderosa, limber, and other pines

Identification: The mountain pine beetle (MPB) begins attacking most pine species on the lower 15 feet of the trunk. Trees are generally killed by the beetles of a single generation. Examination of infested trees usually reveals the presence of pitch tubes. Pitch tubes are made when female beetles bore into the tree. There are two types of pitch tubes. Pitch tubes on successfully infested trees are cream to dark-red masses of resin mixed with boring dust and are one-fourth to one-half inch in diameter. Pitch tubes on unsuccessfully infested trees are larger, three-fourths of an inch to 1 inch in diameter, and widely scattered over the trunk.

Besides having pitch tubes, successfully infested trees will have dry boring dust, similar to fine sawdust, in bark crevices and around the base of the tree. Sometimes, however, infested trees can have boring dust, but not pitch tubes. These trees, called blind attacks, are common during drought years when trees produce little pitch.

Management: Natural controls of MPB include woodpeckers and insects such as clerid beetles that feed on both MPB adults and larvae. Extremely cold temperatures can also reduce MPB populations. However, during outbreaks these natural controls often fail to prevent additional attacks.

Perhaps the most important natural influence is tree vigor. Healthy trees are less attractive to beetles than trees under stress. Vigorously growing trees also have better defenses that allow them to 'pitch out' pine beetles. Cultural controls which promote tree health, open spacing, and diversity of both tree species and size are the primary means of preventing MPB outbreaks. The forest management practice of thinning is the best long-term way to minimize MPB losses.

MPB infested logs can be treated in various ways to kill developing beetles before they emerge as adults in summer. Logs may be burned to kill the larvae under bark. Intense solar radiation that dries out the cambium and raises the temperatures to lethal levels (110F) can kill MPB larvae. Beetles also die if the bark is removed by peeling or milling.

Certain formulations of carbaryl (Sevin) and permethrin (Astro) are effective and may provide satisfactory protection through one flight (one year). These sprays are applied to living green trees in early summer (before mid-July) to repel or kill beetles.

(Taken from "Insects and Diseases of Woody Plants" a CSU cooperative publication and "Forest Insect and Disease Leaflet" from the USDA Forest Service.)

FREMONT COUNTY FIREWISE

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WWW.FREMONTCOUNTYFIREWISE.COM

Thinning Increases Property Values

A recent article by Yeon-Su Kim and Aaron Wells, that was published in the *Journal of Forestry* April/May 2005, took a look at the Wildland Urban interface and tried to quantify the value of doing some sort of thinning.

The article placed properties into different categories based upon the canopy closure or canopy density. A high canopy closure site would be one where the canopies of the trees consist of 70-100% canopy closure and very little light is allowed to penetrate. A medium canopy closure was estimated to have 40-69% canopy closure.

The study area was in Flagstaff, AZ which is dominated by ponderosa pine and as-

pen. The authors placed 'buffers' (0.5 km) around the homes, these zones were similar to defensible space zones. These buffers were far enough from the home to improve the fire survivability should thinning be completed but small enough that the homeowners realized that the area was affecting the structure. These buffers tried to include "what can be seen and easily accessible from one's house".

The authors then tried to determine if indeed there was an increase in the property value if some fuel reduction was completed. What they found was that "If 10% of this high canopy closure area is treated to be medium canopy closure, the sale price of the

home would increase \$3,664. If all areas of high forest canopy closure in the buffer are treated to be the medium level, the house price would increase by more than \$36,640."

Of course this study may only be applicable to certain areas, but it is promising. It is one piece of scientific evidence that supports the thought that people who are moving to the WUI area are willing to pay for the more open areas rather than living in a closed dense canopy forest. For more information please read the entire article in the April/May 2005 Issue of the *Journal of Forestry* volume 103 number 3.



The Society of American Foresters is a leading source of information and is the primary professional organization in the field of forestry.