

FOOTHILLS

OBSERVER

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

Spring 2011

The Mountain Pine Beetle on the Shoshone Forest



It is no surprise, but the mountain pine beetles are killing trees at epidemic levels and will affect the landscape of the forest for years to come. On the Shoshone National Forest, and surrounding lands, spruce bark beetles, Douglas fir beetles, and mountain pine beetles are all present.

The Shoshone National Forest's response to the beetle infestation includes timber harvesting, spraying high value trees, firewood sales, and controlled burns. It is important to them to reduce the potential for wildfire in our communities, while keeping the public and firefighters safe. The foresters also want to keep recreation areas open to

the public as long as it is safe to do so.

Work on assessments and hazard tree removal in campgrounds, resort areas, and other developed sites is a high priority. Work has been performed in the past years, and will continue through fiscal year 2011.

Hazard trees are being dropped by Forest Service crews and the resulting material is being disposed of as firewood. As work progresses, other removal strategies will likely be implemented, including small timber sales or contract removal. Emphasis on utilizing the products, either as firewood or saw logs,

is currently planned.

Addressing forest health has been an emphasis area on the Shoshone since 2002. The Shoshone's timber and fuels programs plan complementary work to mitigate impacts from insect infestations, with more importance placed around high value areas such as communities, private property, recreation facilities, and infrastructure.

The goal of vegetation management in response to the insect infestation is to create a healthier, stronger, sustainable forest that will:

- Enable managers to manage wildfire
- Be resilient to natural disturbances
- Protect watersheds
- Meet the needs of wildlife habitat
- Increase security of infrastructure from the impact of wildfire
- Lead to reduced

fire suppression costs and increased public and firefighter safety.

The 2010 aerial survey indicated that 1.1 million acres of the Shoshone's 2.4 million acres are impacted by insects. Mortality in mature trees in affected areas ranges from 25 to 100 percent. Additional mortality is expected, most notably on southern portions of the Shoshone in areas such as the Wind River drainage.

Project areas to combat this mortality are currently located in the Wind River drainage near Dubois (Upper and Lower Wind Fuels Reduction Projects) and the Middle Fork of the Popo Agie near Lander (Middle Fork Fuels Reduction Project).

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It's Spring Maintenance Time

The days are growing longer by the minute, and warmer weather is finally beginning to return to the foothills and basins of Western Wyoming. As residents of such pristine country, our thoughts rapidly escape to all of the fun activities we left behind last fall.



Clean out yard beds

The National Weather Service here locally has released the first look forward to what appears to be a welcome run off / stream flow prediction for the upcoming summer months. (Welcome unless Mother Nature tricks us again in June with rain and warm weather which leads to flooding.) The streams and rivers of the Wind River Basin are potentially going to see good inflows with the 100% or above snow pack figures released at the first part of February.



All this is welcome news after several years of drought across the region. But, we must not forget that the lasting effects from the drought are yet present in our wildlands, most important to our fire prevention efforts are the pine beetle infestations. The dry years have stressed our forests opening them up for disease attacks and the mountain pine beetle has grasp the opportunity. So, with this in mind, lets not forget that spring cleaning around structures is perhaps more important than ever. It is not breaking news that our trees are dying and dead, so let us not forget that the dead needles are going somewhere since they are no longer on the trees.

Here are just a few reminders about what we really need to do this spring and early summer to have a safe and enjoyable year;

- Clean all needles, twigs, and leaves from the roof, eaves, and gutters.
- Clear debris away from the foundation right afterwards.
- Move and re-stack the firewood pile from last winter. It might have crept a little closer than it should have, and most likely is full of needles as well.
- Clean all vegetation and other accumulated debris out from under or around the deck. What a better time to clean and reseal the deck for that summer barbeque.
- Trim all branches up once again that have grown over the last season, making sure none are overhanging where they should not be.
- Rake out all the smaller shrubs and bushes, not to forget about any ground covers which may have caught trash during the winter winds.
- Double check the house address numbers to make sure they are still visible.
- Mow up any left over unkept grass from last summer.
- Begin a routine of plant watering to green up the

neighborhood—remember to stay consistent to keep plants green all year.

- Review evacuation plans, both subdivision and family. Make changes now if needed since things do change.
- Inspect the cache of emergency supplies and tools.

Just one afternoon and 10 minutes a week make for a good effort on maintaining all the hard work you have already done to be FIREWISE.

Enjoy your summer and be safe.

FREMONT COUNTY FIREWISE

Fremont County Firewise
305 South Smith Road
Riverton, WY 82501

Phone: 307-857-3030
Email:

Part of Good Planning Is Good Planting

Throughout the past 10 years, one of the most critical Firewise principles that we've emphasized is adopting Firewise landscape practices.

While this can and does include paying attention to your home ignition zone—your home and every thing around it with in 100-200 feet— it also relates to vegetation that you have throughout your entire property.

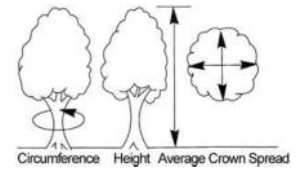
While it's important to keep

grasses cut, to limb up trees to prevent a ladder effect during a raging fire, and to incorporate fuel breaks, it is most important to know which types of plants are safest to have close to your home.

To learn about fire-prone plants versus those that can delay or prevent fire from reaching your home, visit the Firewise Plants List at www.firewise.org/usa/fw_plantlists.htm.

While doing some simple things to help make your Firewise landscape efforts more manageable this spring, your outdoor labors also will have more beneficial long term results.

Research and planning now is perfect opportunity to get a head start on activities you'll want to tackle this spring.



1/3 Mile to Safety

As each of us prepare to spend time with our families this season, watch this video as a refresher of the dangers involved wildfire around our homes.

In October 2003, tragedy struck a family San Diego County, California. For them, nothing would ever be the same.

In August 2010, homeowners,

firefighters, and others gathered in a remote corner of Montana to hear that family's story and learn how to protect their own lives and property should wildfire strike.

Follow them as they walk their own "1/3 of a Mile" and learn more about the events of that terrible day through a remarkable event called a "staff ride". Hear their responses to this emotional and motivating re-

enactment of the event.

Remember, it never happened to that community or that family before either.

The web site is;

www.firesafemt.org/resources

Under resources pick "1/3 mile to safety" for the video.

Have a safe summer!

Fire and gunpowder do not sleep well together -

Proverb

New Website Coming

A new website is being developed to replace the almost 10 year old existing site. The current site has served us well, but lacks some modern day features everyone felt would be more beneficial in today's time.

One of the changes will be the addition of a photo gallery. This gallery will be designed to display YOUR pho-

tos of the work you do. As project get underway this year, take a minute to take a few shots to share with your neighbors.

Another expanded feature will be the addition of the Homestead Park community page, and the Wind River Fire Prevention Council's page. They will join the Union Pass page that has existed previ-

ously. We feel it is important for the communities to have a common place for the sharing of information, what ever it may be.

The look is going to change eventually for the better, but the current site will remain functional until the new site is ready hopefully in early May..

Check in from time to time to see the new site.



Wildfire Safety Through Prevention

Fremont County Firewise
305 South Smith Road
Riverton, WY 82501

WERE ON THE WEB!

WWW.FREMONTCOUNTYFIREWISE.COM

There's Been a Change



Firewise Coordinator
Ron Wempen

As most of you know by now, Jeff Swanson has left his position at Fremont County Firewise as the Firewise Coordinator. Jeff has moved on to become one of the crew bosses (Crew Supervisor) with the Wyoming State Forestry program at the Wyoming Honor Farm here in Riverton.

It is wonderful to still have Jeff involved with our local forestry efforts here in Fremont County.

Ron Wempen has been hired to replace Jeff here at Firewise and started work January 1st.

Ron is a lifelong resident of Fremont County and brings a great deal of experience and

back ground with him.

Ron has been involved with the fire and emergency services here locally for a number of years as a volunteer. As a paid professional, he has a background in business operation and customer relations here locally through which many of you already know him from.

The challenge of continuing a superb program for the residents of Fremont County is something he is ready to face head on.

Much work has been accomplished over the years by local folks, and large projects were completed with grant monies last summer. As one of the larger goals, Ron hopes to acquire more money over the next few

years to continue the much needed work across the area.

As the summer season unfolds, take a minute to meet Ron and update him on what has been done, and what is being done.

He can be contacted at the Fremont County Fire District office (Location of the Fremont County Firewise office) or anytime by email.

Fremont County Firewise
305 South Smith Road
Riverton, WY 82501
307-857-3030

Email

fremontfirewise@wyoming.com