

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT – 2009 by Peggy Burch

This past year, the environmental focus has been on our beautiful treed hillsides and properties. Last year, The Retreat was in a normal mountain pine beetle situation. This year has changed drastically. We are noticing more and more trees around us turning brown as it gets warmer. These trees that are turning yellow-brown to reddish-brown now in June and July were attacked by the pine beetles last fall.

Why is there such a drastic difference between normal infestation last year and way-above normal this year? The answer may be the high wind events that occurred across the divide last fall at the time the beetle were flying to new trees. Some of the beetles were blown as far as Fort Collins and Loveland where about 300 pine trees were infested last fall. Even some areas of western Nebraska with no native pines experienced beetle infestations in windbreak trees. In Canada, mountain pine beetles have been seen on radar 2,500 feet above ground level in high winds.

Many residents of The Retreat are spraying their trees this year to prevent infestation. Others are using pheromone packets on some trees and spraying the more valuable trees. Some residents are using just pheromone packets which provide some unknown degree of protection. The spraying and installation of pheromone packets should have been completed by the end of June.

New information just received indicates that the beetles are about two weeks ahead of schedule. This means that the beetles will fly from the lodgepole around the first of July to the middle of July. The emergence in the ponderosa has also speeded up and the expected flight will be starting in the middle of July. Any trees that were attacked last year and turning brown in June now should have been taken down. At the time of the annual meeting, it will be too late to take affected lodgepole pine out and maybe even too late to take the ponderosa down.

This is a serious situation. Over the next few years, we could lose many of our pine trees. One expert in the field indicated 90% of the lodgepole and 70% of the ponderosa could be lost. We must be proactive to save our valued trees