

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT - JULY, 2008

By Peggy Burch

The environmental report for July will be on Mountain Pine Beetle as that is the subject foremost in the minds of area residents. The areas under siege are still mainly on the west slope where lodgepole pines are being devastated. Rocky Mountain Park is experiencing some areas of destruction as is Cameron Pass in Poudre Canyon to the west of Fort Collins.

Our area is still experiencing just normal occurrences of infestation in our ponderosa pines. There are areas in The Retreat and close by in the National Forest where ponderosa pines were infested last year and were not cut down and disposed of properly. The beetles still remaining in these trees will soon fly and attack trees nearby. This will result in attacks showing up on some of our properties. The trees cannot just be cut down. The beetle larvae in the cut trees can still mature and go on to destroy other trees.

Some households in The Retreat chose to have their trees sprayed to prevent loss of the trees. Spraying is 90% to 95% effective if done by a proficient tree expert. It does have some negative environmental aspects. A few households chose not to spray, but instead opted for pheromone patches to keep the beetles from attacking trees. Use of pheromones in this manner is still in the experimental stage but shows some promise.

People are asking what the future holds for our trees. At this point, no one really knows. Tree experts are divided when it comes to future actions of mountain pine beetle. The last massive infestation affected ponderosa pines. The mountain pine beetle did not transfer easily to the lodgepole and other species of pine. Some very knowledgeable tree people feel that this might hold true for this epidemic also. Others feel that the extremely high numbers of beetles, combined with drought and warmer winters, will cause them to go into ponderosa pine with no difficulty.

What you can and should do is to identify trees that are newly attacked this fall. Wait until the end of September and inspect each of your pine trees. If you see the characteristic popcorn-looking pitch tubes, have someone who is knowledgeable about mountain pine beetle to verify attack and give you suggestions about the proper methods to dispose of the tree. That way, you will have several months to decide how to handle the affected trees. If a neighboring property has affected trees, it is your right to contact the owner. If the owner doesn't take action, it is also your right to report the matter to the County Forester. Remember, you must take action and responsibility for your own property and trees.

Please feel free to contact me at (970) 577-1912 or at peggyaburch7@q.com for additional information.