

Environmental Report – March 18, 2011

This winter has been very dry and windy. This causes the trees in the forest to become weaker and less able to deter invaders and disease. Mountain pine beetle will attack weaker trees first. We all know mpb is in our area. Many of us have lost trees and we can all see the dead trees around us. Although this winter was cold, it was not nearly cold enough to kill the mpb larvae. There is not much that we can do to protect our trees at this point. The choices are few - insecticidal spray for prevention, thinning of trees to make remaining trees healthier, placement of pheromone packets or do nothing at all. Each homeowner must make a choice. Please be respectful of each other.

If you intend to have your trees sprayed, it should be done before the end of May. The beetles fly on a bell curve. The main flight is July to August. Some fly very early summer and some later in fall. Pheromone packets should be in place by the end of May also. As homeowners become desperate, more and more so-called remedies come on the market. If you make the decision to use a preventative insecticide, make sure that it is one specifically labeled for mountain pine beetle and have a licensed tree sprayer do the work. If the tree is not sprayed correctly, then you have paid for something that might not work. Right now there are three chemicals labeled for use on mpb: carbaryl, permethrin and bifenthrin. There is still no chemical or means to help a tree after it has been attacked.

While pheromone patches may offer some protection, they do not seem to offer protection in all cases. There has been limited forced testing of pheromones, but results are still questionable. Pheromone packets are usually available from licensed arborists and tree sprayers. CSU has a good website with more information on mpb at www.ext.colostate.edu. There is a site search near the top on the right-hand side.

Wildfire is a big concern right now due to the dry winter and high winds. There have been several grass fires in northern Colorado already this year. Cut down all dry grasses and remove deadfall from your area. Be cautious using power tools as sparks can ignite dry foliage. Most of all, be vigilant.

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P.S. The ticks are out already. Don't forget to check your dogs, your cats, and yourself!