

Environmental Report – March 2012

The weather has not done our environment any good this winter. We have had terrible winds that deplete the moisture in our landscapes. There has not been much snow this winter season and now it appears that spring is comparatively early for those of us who live in The Retreat. All of this makes our pine trees more susceptible to mountain pine beetle. There are rumors that the MPB are maturing in less than 1 year resulting in two flights per year. This has been reported at lower elevations. It is mostly anecdotal at this point. There are no proven scientific facts supporting two flights per year a year at this time. However, it is probably true that the beetles are flying earlier.

Noxious weeds are advancing in The Retreat. Thistles, knapweeds, hoary alyssum and cheatgrass are appearing in various places throughout The Retreat. These are invasive illegal weeds that do not support wildlife and displace our native plants. Although woolly mullein is not on the noxious weed list of Larimer County, it is on the state noxious weed list. As many of us can attest, it probably should be added to the County's list also. The weed information for Larimer County is www.larimer.org/weeds.

White pine blister rust could become a problem in our area. Bristlecone pines, limber pines and any 5-needled white bark pine are susceptible. The spores of this fungus came to the eastern U. S. from China in seedling white pines that were being planted to reforest heavily logged areas. It has spread and destroyed whole forests. White pine forests in southern and western Colorado are being devastated. It has been present in Wyoming for quite a few years and is now in the Red Feather Lakes area. The fungus has an alternate host, (currants) which are not bothered by the disease but spores are blown onto the trunks of the white pines which die after a couple of years. While we don't have many of the susceptible pines in our area, there are some which are quite wonderful.

Take care of your trees. If any have MPB now, get them out before the beetles fly.

Be firewise. This could be a really bad fire year. And the **ticks** are out.

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