

Formation of a Weed Management District

Larimer County will no longer be providing weed control services in the outlying areas of western Larimer County. This includes Allenspark to Drake in the east and then west to Rocky Mountain National Park. This includes Estes Park and Glen Haven areas. Fort Collins and Loveland will still be serviced by the County. Areas north of Fort Collins have already formed their own weed management groups. Estes Park has contracted with a private business in Fort Collins for weed control.

Two meetings have been recently held to discuss strategies necessary to form a weed management area for the Estes Valley, including most of the areas that have been left without a weed control district. There are many entities involved in this group effort. This includes conservation and environmental groups, communities of Allenspark and Pinewood Springs, the towns of Estes Park, Lyons, residents in the north end of Estes Park, The Retreat and Glen Haven. The Larimer County Weed District has sent a rep as have CDOT, CSU Extension Division, USFS and Rocky Mountain National Park. The collaborative effort has been named Estes Land Stewardship Area or (ELSA)

ELSA Mission Statement:

“Promote the cooperation and collaboration of local residents, federal, state, and local agencies and entities in efforts that enhance and preserve the ecological integrity of public and private lands on the eastern perimeter of Rocky Mountain National Park. Such efforts shall encourage land stewardship practices that sustain plant communities which provide wildlife habitat, aesthetic value and help resist encroachment of invasive species.”

The initial and primary objective will be to address the threat of noxious weeds invading the area and to stay in compliance with the Colorado Noxious Weed act. ELSA will promote the awareness of invasive plant species and their impacts through education and outreach efforts and by promoting the use of various weed management practices to prevent the establishment of new populations. In order to preserve the ecological integrity of this area, we must contain, reduce and/or eradicate current populations of noxious weeds.

We hope to achieve the objective through the use of newspaper articles, presentations at meetings and events and dissemination of educational literature. We will sponsor weed pull events and weed identification hikes along with site visits to help private property owners identify weeds. We want to be able to provide not only information but to help

the property owners eliminate the noxious weeds. The group has applied for grants and we hope to have cost-sharing programs.

People need to be made aware of the ecological dangers of letting the noxious, nonnative and invasive weeds to continue to take over our private and public lands. We have many very capable people involved to help. The main focus at this time is to get people in the affected areas involved and knowledgeable.

I am representing Larimer County Extension Master Gardeners in this effort. I must present views that are supported by scientific studies approved by CSU. I need a member of The Retreat to join with us to help with outreach efforts. I can represent both the Master Gardeners and The Retreat temporarily but there really needs to be someone who can speak for just the Retreat.

Mountain Pine Beetle

Now is an excellent time to identify pine trees that were attacked this fall. The pitch tubes are usually quite obvious. Start looking about three feet above the ground and up to where the tree trunk narrows to less than 6 inches. Circle the tree several times to be sure. Carry a piece of chalk or some paint to mark the trees you have inspected. Put a big X on any you suspect might have pine beetle. If you find just a couple of pitch tubes on any one tree, the tree might survive. Remember, however, one beetle can produce seventy-five offspring.

There have been spotty reports of mountain pine beetle now attacking spruce trees and some Douglas fir in areas where the normal pine hosts have been depleted.

Pines, such as bristlecone and pinyon that do not get attacked very often, are now showing evidence of MPB attack in locations where firewood has been moved from the mountains.

Mr. Hilman, the owner of the tree that is badly attacked, has contacted me. He indicated that they had intended to remove that tree last summer but did not have a chainsaw that was large enough. They sprayed all of the other pines in the area but not that one as their intent was still to remove it at some time. They are going to take the tree down before the beetles fly next fall. Thanks to Mark for advising the Hilmans. They are very concerned about MPB and wildfire and are doing everything they can to protect their property.

Peggy Burch
Environmental Committee