

INFORMATION PRESS RELEASE

SPRUCE BEETLE EPIDEMIC DISCOVERED ON STRAWBERRY RIDGE

Heber City

U.S. Forest Service officials have recently discovered a new outbreak of spruce beetles in the spruce stands along Strawberry Ridge between Heber City and Strawberry Reservoir. Officials discovered the outbreak while surveying a fuel break location around the Bryant's Fork Summer Home sites during the first week of March. This is the largest outbreak of spruce beetle on the Heber Ranger District in approximately 20 years, the last occurring in the mid-1980's near Mill Hollow. Aggressive suppression action taken on the Mill Hollow outbreak is credited with limiting the damage to the surrounding forest.

Forest officials are currently evaluating the Strawberry Ridge outbreak to determine what actions may be appropriate and may be proposed.

Newly infested trees are not always apparent to the untrained eye. The tops (crowns) of the trees appear green and healthy, however, the trunk of the tree shows the evidence. Woodpeckers are actively stripping the bark from heavily infested trees while feasting on beetles. The trunks of such trees appear un-naturally orange as the outer layer of bark has been removed. The foliage will not show signs of the beetle infestation until mid to late summer. At that time, trees will begin to dry and the green foliage will fade and begin to fall from the branches. Forest visitors can expect to see many such trees along Strawberry Ridge next fall.

As part of the current evaluation process, forest officials have counted current infested trees and the prior year's infested trees (now without foliage) in approximately 200 acres of spruce stands adjacent to Bryant's Fork. Nearly 600 actively infested and over 100 prior-year trees were counted, giving an expansion ratio of approximately 5 new infested trees per one prior-year infested tree. This rapid expansion of a beetle population is typical of an epidemic situation. The current epidemic is likely a result of stress in the older, heavily stocked stands when combined with recurrent drought years.

Actions being considered before spring include the use of pheromone traps and trap trees. Pheromones are natural attractants for the spruce beetle. Trap trees are felled green trees that lure the beetles to the tree. Long term actions being considered include thinning the forest to relieve competition stress on the remaining trees. The Forest Service will soon be releasing public involvement documents detailing its proposed action.

[Several photos are attached that may be used in support of this press release. Full resolution images are available by contacting Doug Page, phone 435-654-7232, email dhp@fs.fed.us.]

Photo credits: Doug Page, USDA-Forest Service



Beetle Infested trees adjacent to cabin in Bryant's Fork.



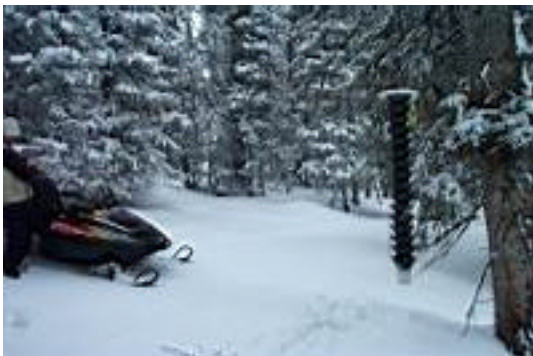
Blue dots (added electronically) indicate spruce beetle infested trees.



Woodpecker activity on beetle infested trees.



Entomologist Darren Blackford removes bark from an infested tree to inspect the stage of development of bark beetles.



Funnel trap baited with pheromone attractants to monitor spruce beetle populations.