

Utah Forest News

Utah Forest Landowner Education Program Newsletter

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Spring 2009

Sevier County is Home to National Champion Curlleaf Mountain Mahogany

Bruce Bonebrake of Cedar City was hunting blue grouse above Fillmore last November when he came into an unusual basin that was filled with extraordinarily large mountain mahogany trees. After seeing several trees that he was sure would beat the state record, he came across one "that put me in awe. I sat down under it for about five minutes, it was just exceptional." He said that he had never seen anything like it before; one of the branches was bigger than the state record holder this tree beat.

Bonebrake enlisted the help of his friend, professional forester Doug Page (UFN Fall '05), to make an official measurement of the tree. He went back with Page the following spring to have him measure the tree for nomination as a champion tree. Big trees are measured with a point system that includes one point for each inch of circumference, one point for each foot of total height, and a quarter point for each foot of crown spread. The official numbers on this mahogany are



Bruce Bonebrake and Meridith Perkins show the crown spread of the national champion curlleaf mountain mahogany.

Bonebrake is a wildlife biologist for the state of Utah, and between his work and his recreation he has seen a lot of mountain mahogany trees, enough to recognize a champion. "When you hunt blue grouse, you work the hillsides, and that was what I was doing when I came into this basin."

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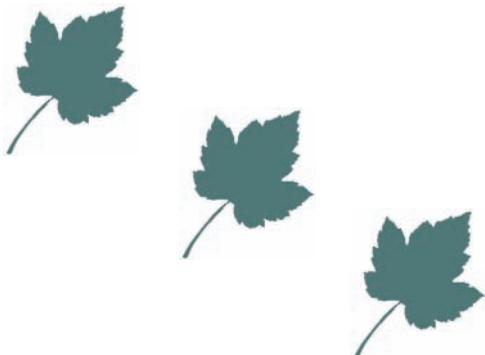
148 inches in circumference (that is a nearly four-foot diameter!), 16 feet tall, and a 25-foot crown spread according to the National Register of Big Trees page on the American Forests Web site.

There are only a handful of National Champions in Utah, making this find pretty special. This tree is in Sevier County, on the Fishlake National Forest. The previous national champion was in California.

After a few minutes of reflection beneath the crown of this newly discovered champion, Bonebrake found his hunting buddy, Chris Colt, and took him back to the tree to show him his find and take a few photos. When I asked Bonebrake if he ended up getting any grouse that day, he said he and Colt usually do pretty well, “but the only thing we bagged that day was a national record.”

For more information on measuring champion trees, or to see the champion tree lists, see our Web site at: http://extension.usu.edu/forestry/UtahForests/BigTrees_TreeHunt.htm.

by Darren McAvoy



Meridith Perkins, Urban Forestry and Big Tree Coordinator for the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands, measures the circumference of the champion tree.



Chris Colt, Doug Page, and Bruce Bonebrake sitting beneath the champ.

A Message to Forest Users about Coordinated Resource Offering Protocol Web Site

Utah forests are as diverse as the landscape itself. While Utah is only 29% forested, these forests have high scenic, recreation, wildlife and other forest use values. Several factors have contributed to a decline in forest health over the years, including previous logging and historic grazing practices, drought, fire exclusion, and insect and disease infestations.

Stewardship and protection of Utah's forests can be achieved by reducing the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire and by restoring fire-dependent ecosystems. Use of the biomass and wood fiber generated from forest restoration projects can reduce treatment costs as well as provide an economic benefit to local rural communities. Also, using woody biomass for renewable energy contributes to U.S. energy independence.

However, many times businesses do not know about upcoming projects, nor are the projects coordinated between suppliers. Without this information, businesses cannot adequately plan or expand their operations to utilize this forest material as it is made available. A new tool is now available through a partnership with Utah Forestry, Fire and State Lands, the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and Mater Engineering of Corvallis, Oregon. It is called the Coordinated Resource Offering Protocol (CROP).



Mountains of usable woody biomass are made available through fuel reduction programs.

CROP coordinates forest resources and documents these resources by location, volume, age class, and species. This information can be used by businesses who need to know about available forest resources in order to plan their operations.

CROPs have been completed for all of Utah, and parts of northern Arizona, northwest Colorado and southwest Wyoming. This information is now available in a user-friendly format. On the CROP Web site, you can pull up summaries of wood offerings for up to five years by species, location, and supplier.

The Web site is located here: www.crop-usa.com/utah/.

We hope you will visit this Web site and use the information provided. The data is updated annually. Please share this information with others who might be interested. Also, if you or your company would like further information or training in using this tool, please contact one of the individuals listed below.

Geoff McNaughton, FFSL: 801-538-5460
 Scott Bell, US Forest Service: 801-625-5259
 Aaron Wilkerson, BLM: 801-539-4077.

Timber Prices Down

According to Robert Paroz, Valuation/Appraisals Specialist with Region 4 of the US Forest Service, prices for every type of timber have decreased substantially since 2007. See the tables below to compare 2007 and 2009 prices for spruce, mixed conifer species, subalpine fir, aspen, houselogs, and all species of dead trees. Region 4 of the US Forest Service includes all of Utah and Nevada, as well as portions of Idaho and Wyoming.

These prices represent stumpage value, which is the value of the logs at the mill minus logging and transportation costs. Keep in mind that these figures are rough estimates that are based on the average high bids for US Forest Service timber sales. To gain an accurate assessment of the timber on your land, you need to have a professional forester conduct an appraisal. However, these average figures are low enough to suggest that now may not be the best time to harvest timber on your land.

For updated timber prices, visit: http://extension.usu.edu/forestry/Management/Timber_TimberWorth.htm.

Timber Prices as of 4/28/2009

Type of Wood	Price per MBF (thousand board feet)
Spruce (live)	\$63.56
Mixed Conifer (live)	\$17.74
Subalpine Fir (live)	\$5.56
Aspen (live)	\$1.85
Dead (all species)	\$37.52
Houselogs (primarily dead with some live)	\$179.28

Timber Prices as of 6/29/2007

Type of Wood	Price per MBF (thousand board feet)
Spruce (live)	\$206.11
Mixed Conifer (live)	\$130.09
Subalpine Fir (live)	\$30.61
Aspen (live)	\$1.85
Dead (all species, includes dead houselogs)	\$126.52

Rocky Mountain Research Station Scientist Edits New Book on Bark Beetle Outbreaks

As the Intermountain spring gains momentum and outdoor enthusiasts head for the region's national forests, they'll encounter shriveled, rust-colored sentinels in the wake of continued ravages by tiny insects.

"Residents of Utah and other western states are noticing more and more dead trees in local forests and wondering, 'What's going on?'" says Barbara Bentz, research entomologist with Logan's US Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station.

Bentz, who serves as an adjunct associate professor in Utah State University's Department of Wildland Resources, helped to organize a 2005 symposium of scientists from throughout North America to explore the increasing frequency of bark beetle outbreaks in western forests. With writer Hannah Nordhaus, she compiled the group's observations into a concise, easy-to-read text aimed at non-scientific audiences. The 44-page booklet, *Bark Beetle Outbreaks in North America: Causes and Consequences*, was recently released by University of Utah Press.

"Our aim with the book was to present scientific information in a form that lay people could understand," Bentz says.

Featuring color photos and graphs, the book details varied species of bark beetles causing the infestations, along with descriptions of climate change, forestry management practices, human influences and disturbances that could be accelerating the outbreaks.

"We believe that two major factors are responsible for increased beetle infestations," Bentz says. "One is climate change with associated shifts in precipitation and temperature that influence both the beetles and their host trees. The other is a legacy of forestry

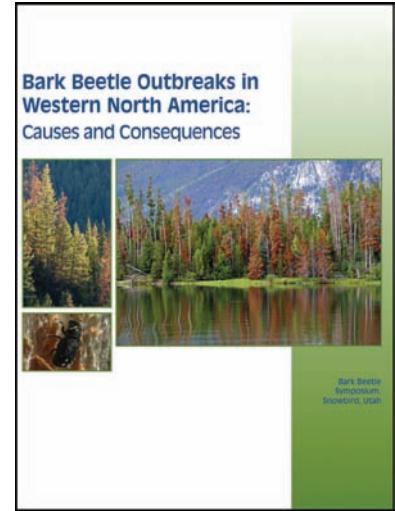
management practices during the past 100 years that have created forest landscapes throughout western North America that are highly susceptible to bark beetle outbreaks."

Bark beetles are native insects of western North America and Bentz cautions that little is known about their impact on regional forests prior to the close of the 19th century. "We ask, 'Are the current outbreaks unprecedented?' and, because we don't have a long history of recorded data, that's hard to answer," she says. "But based on the information we do have, it appears today's outbreaks are longer in duration and intensity and occurring on a larger geographic scale than those of the past 150 years."

USU scientists who contributed to the book include Trustee Professor Jim MacMahon, director of the USU Ecology Center; Jim Powell, professor in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics; Mike White, associate professor in the Department of Watershed Sciences and Jesse Logan, former USFS research entomologist, now retired, who served as an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Wildland Resources.

The publication, funded by the US Forest Service Rapid Science Assessment Team, is available for purchase online from University of Utah Press.

by Mary-Ann Muffoletto



Bryce Canyon National Park Fights Fire with Fire

What do you do about the safety of half a million visitors who drive the 14 mile road into Bryce Canyon National Park, a road with one way in and one way out, just upslope from several thousand acres of dead trees and overgrown forest? If you are the forward-thinking management of Bryce Canyon, you close the road for a few days after the monsoon rains, but before the winter snows, and burn the whole thing with a helicopter and 45 seasoned fire personnel.

The worry about the potential catastrophe of having visitors trapped in a wildfire situation, combined with a desire to return fire to the ecology of the mixed conifer and ponderosa forests of Bryce motivated the park managers' decision. The prescribed fire was done in conjunction with the adjacent Dixie National Forest.

When Bruce Fields, Fuels Management Specialist for Bryce Canyon National Park., started his job in 2003, the park had already started building fireline by hand along the proposed lower boundary of the fire. The upper boundary was to be the paved road through the park. When Fields stepped into the fray the park had already spent a quarter of a million dollars on the project, and he could see it was going to be important to partner with the Dixie National Forest to get it done.

After lots of leg work and paper work, including NEPA analysis by both parties, smoke mitigation plans, and weather monitoring plans, they had the go-ahead to proceed. The National Forest started the process by conducting a 250 acre timber sale on their side of the fence to reduce fuel loading on that portion of the burn, and to utilize some of the trees on the site. The administration of the park and the forest spent a fair bit of energy on communicating with the

local communities about the project before lighting the match. One of the concerns repeatedly expressed by community leaders was that the park was not going to harvest any of the timber prior to the burn. Park Superintendent Eddie Lopez said that he had to stress with them that the park has a different mission than the Forest Service, and that timber harvesting is not part of that

mission. County Commissioners also voiced their concern that the project not begin during Labor Day weekend, so the project was scheduled for the first opportunity after the holiday.

On September 8, 2008 they started burning with hand-held torches, called drip torches, just below the road along the entire width of the burn. This created a large 'black line,' or area that has already been burned, giving them an extra margin of safety before



This prescribed burn in Bryce Canyon National Park will increase visitor safety and improve forest health.

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the helicopter started dropping fire. The helicopter was equipped with a ‘ping-pong machine’ which dropped ping-pong sized balls injected with a chemical mix that causes them to ignite a minute or so after they land. A fire professional rode aboard the helicopter, controlling the amount of fire the helicopter applied.

In the end the whole process took about a week and treated approximately 3,000 acres of the 4,000 acre project area. Today there is a mosaic of forest conditions

in the burned area. Some areas burned pretty hot, killing trees, but many areas burned with much less

intensity, leaving most of the trees alive, but removing downed material and underbrush. This will allow for

more sunlight on the forest floor, promoting the regeneration of desirable species such as ponderosa pine and quaking aspen. Fortunately, these agency personnel demonstrated fortitude to go ahead and light this fire under the relatively desirable conditions of early September, as opposed to trying to fight a wildfire under more severe fire weather conditions during the heat of July.

by Darren McAvoy



This photo shows the part of the fire that burned the hottest.

For more information regarding any of the information presented in this newsletter, please call Darren McAvoy at Utah State University, 435-797-0560, write to him at 5230 Old Main Hill, Logan, UT 84322-5230, or email darren.mcavoy@usu.edu.

The Utah State University Forestry Extension Web site, found at <http://extension.usu.edu/forestry>, is an excellent source of technical forestry information for woodland owners. Check the “What’s New” section periodically for new postings.

State of Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands (DFF&SL) service foresters for your area can be contacted by calling 801-538-5555.

Ideas and written contributions to this newsletter are encouraged. Send your contributions or comments to the return address above or call 435-797-0560, or email darren.mcavoy@usu.edu.



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COMING EVENTS

“Surviving the Downturn and Positioning Yourself for the Recovery.” A free business and marketing presentation by visiting professor Lloyd Irland, Yale University School of Forestry. July 23, 2009. Flagstaff, AZ. For more information or to register, call CCC Small Business Development Center at 928-526-7653.

Great Basin Fire History and Site Visit to Juniper Pellet: August 28-29, 2009. Baker and Ely, NV. For more information, visit: www.usu.edu/saf.

Restoring the West Conference. Peaks to Valleys: Innovative Land Management for the Great Basin. October 27 & 28, 2009. Logan, UT. For more information, visit: www.restoringthewest.org.



This subalpine fir in Cottonwood Canyon was stripped of almost all its bark, most likely by a hungry porcupine.