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Bent Tree HOA

October 13, 2020

On September 28, the Colorado State Forest Service conducted a fall assessment of the Bent Tree development. The purpose of the inspection was to identify any insect and/or disease issues that need to be addressed.

Findings

During our inspection we identified 19 active mountain pine beetle (MPB) and 1 active Ips beetle tree. Locations of infested trees can be seen on the attached maps as well as in the table below. Most of these trees are growing in fairly dense patches and many are also infested with dwarf mistletoe. These factors were likely exacerbated by drought this year to make them especially weak and susceptible to bark beetle attacks. 19 MPB trees sounds like a lot compared with past inspections, but many of these trees are relatively small and will be easy to remove.

We also observed signs of older mountain pine beetle attacks on green trees adjacent to wood piles. Fortunately, the trees were strong enough to withstand the attacks, but this is a good reminder that freshly cut wood is attractive to bark beetles and allows them to breed and build their populations.

It is important that homeowners know not to stack any cut material next to or in between live trees; this is a sure way to attract MPB.

Other Observations

Insect and disease activity in the neighborhood appears to be similar to 2017 (year of last inspection). The large areas affected by ponderosa pine dwarf mistletoe will continue to decline. A general boundary of the most severe mistletoe infestation is identified on the enclosed map. Landowners should consider removing the most heavily infested trees over time. Resistant species, such as Douglas-fir, white fir, spruce, limber pine, pinyon pine, and Rocky mountain juniper can be planted in their place to maintain forest cover.

Notes on fire mitigation identified in the inspection are not exhaustive, but represent some of the areas where work has been done or improvements can be made. The number of stumps observed while traversing the neighborhood is an indicator that property owners are making progress. One method that can yield great results for the amount of work put in is what foresters call "thinning from below". By identifying and removing weak, suppressed trees, often with sparse crowns or scraggly growth forms, landowners can greatly reduce ladder fuels that allow fires to travel into the canopy while improving the health of the residual forest stand.

Recommendations

We recommend all MPB and Ips trees identified during the inspection be removed and taken off site to reduce further infestations. Management of Ips is not as important as MPB, however if populations are allowed to persist damage on a larger scale can occur.

Slash produced from fire mitigation efforts should also be hauled off site, but any material kept to be used as firewood should be de-barked, or split and scattered in a sunny area to accelerate the drying of the inner bark.