

**West Region Wildfire Council  
Meeting Minutes  
9/11/14**

**Meeting Attendance**

	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>
<b>1</b>	Austin	Tom	Log Hill Fire
<b>2</b>	Beckhardt	Dave	Logg Hill Fire
<b>3</b>	Bennett	John	Telluride Fire
<b>4</b>	Brack	Ben	WRWC
<b>5</b>	Bundshuh	Andy	NPS
<b>6</b>	Chappell	Randy	BLM
<b>7</b>	Chavez	Thad	USFS
<b>8</b>	Conway	Bill	Arrowhead Fire
<b>9</b>	Davis	Michael	BLM-MIFMU
<b>10</b>	Gelsomini	Jim	Arrowhead Fire
<b>11</b>	Homstad	Kelly	BLM
<b>12</b>	Latta	Trevor	OFPD
<b>13</b>	Odom	Luke	DFPC
<b>14</b>	Oxford	Ross	NPS
<b>15</b>	Pankratz	Sam	CSFS
<b>16</b>	Robinson	Corey	USFS
<b>17</b>	Staehle	Alan	OFPD
<b>18</b>	Tuten	Matt	USFS

**Objective/Purpose**

The Council gathered to discuss the following:

**Introductions**

Jamie Gomez was unable to attend this meeting due to illness. Austin Shelby facilitated this meeting and initiated a round robin of introductions.

**Approval of Minutes**

Minutes approved without corrections.

**Presentation**

**Beetles Common To Trees on the Western Slope: How do we manage for fire?**

To view the PowerPoint presentation, please visit the following link:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B73\\_1AQQokPxY0g1N0cyblRSWDg/edit?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B73_1AQQokPxY0g1N0cyblRSWDg/edit?usp=sharing)

Matt Tuten, Forester with the US Forest Service and Austin Shelby, Forester with the Colorado State Forest Service gave a presentation and lead a discussion on the abundance and distribution of western Colorado's most prevalent beetle's and forest pests, their impact on our forest's, and the implications for wildfire management. Matt and Austin explained that there is quite a bit of discussion about the likelihood, severity and behavior of wildland fire in a beetle infested forest. According to Tuten and Shelby, in general, no one assumption is correct. The relationship between stands of beetle killed trees and wildfire is dependent on a whole host of factors including the location (slope and aspect), the species of dead tree(s), the percentage of trees killed, the timing of the fire, the timing of when the trees were killed by the beetles, and numerous other factors. As a result, efforts to manage and mitigate for wildfire in beetle kill areas is also dependent on a whole host of factors. Can the forested area be accessed? Is there any market for the material that is being cut? Is their willingness on the part of the landowner? The answers to these questions, and many others, will serve to drive decision making with regards to wildfire management and mitigation efforts.

In an ongoing effort to understand the extent and severity of forest health conditions, at a statewide level, the USFS and the CSFS have partnered to conduct aerial surveys on an annual basis. Each year, a survey team flies over our forests and documents the extent of beetle kill. Essentially, the teams slowly fly over the mountains and flat land areas and hand draw on large topographic maps, doing their best to depict the size and shape of each infestation pocket. This information is then synthesized in to a series of highly detailed and information intensive maps and corresponding reports. For more information of this effort, and to view the maps that have been generated, visit: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r2/forest-grasslandhealth/?cid=STELPRDB5165873>

While nearly every tree species in Colorado has some kind of beetle or other pest associated with it, there are a few species that have been a cause for the most concern, especially in the southwest part of the state. Amongst these are the Spruce Beetle, the Mountain Pine Beetle, the Pinyon Ips Beetle, the Douglas-fir Beetle, the Fir Engraver Beetle and the Western Spruce Budworm. Perhaps the beetle that has received the most attention in the Colorado press has been the Mountain Pine Beetle, which has killed many Lodgepole Pine trees along the I-70 corridor and throughout Colorado where those trees exist. Since 2009, the number of forested acres that have been effected by Mountain Pine Beetle has begun to decrease (on an annual basis), primarily due to the fact this beetle is running out of additional forest land that has not already been effected. Locally, the Fir Engraver Beetle has been responsible for most of the dead trees that can be seen in around the town of Ouray. This beetle is attacking and leading to the death of White Fir trees. Management options for the forested areas around Ouray are limited, primarily as a result of the extremely steep terrain where access is challenging, at best, and nearly impossible in many areas. The Subalpine Fir, located in forested areas that are at elevations of 7,000 feet and up, are being effected by numerous pathogens including the Western Balsam Bark, Armillaria Root Rot (fungal) and the Spruce Budworm. The Spruce Beetle is having a major impact on Spruce tree populations in southern Colorado, with the majority of tree death occurring in the last 5-7 years. This beetle is causing a very large and extremely rapid decline in spruce tree populations. Forest management options to deal with the rising spruce beetle epidemic are limited and complicated by a variety of factors.

The group then discussed these beetle and pest infestations and the implications for forest and wildfire management. This complex issue will be a challenge for resource managers, private landowners and wildfire managers for years to come.

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#### **Incident Updates, Round Robin & Next Meeting**

- Luke Odom and Ross Oxford returned from wildfires in Oregon.
- There have not been any wildfire incidents within the WRWC area.
- The next WRWC meeting will be on October 9<sup>th</sup> and will feature a presentation by Dr. Patricia A. Champ of the USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station regarding the initial findings of their collaborative social science research project investigating the factors that influence homeowner's perceptions of wildfire, wildfire risk and the factors that influence homeowners to mitigate their wildfire risk in Delta County, CO.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 pm.