



United States Department of Agriculture

Black Hills National Forest

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News Release

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Forestry Officials Release 2016 Forest Health Report

Custer, SD - The U.S. Forest Service, South Dakota Department of Agriculture (SDDA) and Wyoming State Forestry Division have released the results of the 2016 forest health surveys of the Black Hills. Both aerial photo analysis and ground surveys show overall mountain pine beetle populations declining from prior years. The surveys reveal the mountain pine beetle epidemic is over and populations have returned to normal levels.

Aerial surveys conducted last fall indicate that approximately 2,500 acres have been affected last year, while approximately 17,000 acres were affected in the year prior. About 448,000 acres have been affected since the epidemic started nearly 20 years ago. While the end of the epidemic is apparent, the mountain pine beetle continues to be a native insect in the Black Hills. As such, trees or groups of trees will continue to be killed each year, which is natural and expected.

“I am thankful the hard work by our forest service employees, our partners and conservation leaders has paid off. I appreciate the work by all and look forward to working together to make the forest more resilient into the future,” said Mark Van Every, Black Hills National Forest Supervisor.

Dave Thom, Black Hills Regional Mountain Pine Beetle Working Group Coordinator said, “We are very pleased that all of the hard work over the last six years has helped contribute toward a reduction of beetle populations in key areas. The 15 partners have worked very hard to minimize beetle effects on private lands, protect resources and sustain industry capacity. We look forward to continuing collaboration to create forests that are resilient to future beetle epidemics.”

As a native species, the mountain pine beetle has always been a part of the Black Hills forest ecosystem, with periodic epidemics. The first recorded epidemic in the Black Hills occurred from the late 1890s through the early 1900s. Epidemics also occurred in the 1930s, 1940s, 1960s and 1970s, each lasting 8-13 years.

“The all lands approach to suppressing this epidemic has brought together new partnerships among federal, state and local governments, industry and private landowners. The support of the governor, legislature, and county commissioners is greatly appreciated. We look forward to continuing these partnerships as we work toward creating a more resilient future forest condition,” said Greg Josten, South Dakota State Forester.

"I greatly appreciate the support that we have received from the governor and the legislature in Wyoming to help us in the bark beetle battle. That support along with the great work of the conservation districts and other partners has led to the success we have seen in this effort," said Bill Crapser, Wyoming State Forester.

The complete survey results for the Rocky Mountain Region, including Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming are available at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/r2/forest-grasslandhealth>

Insect mapping was a cooperative effort between South Dakota Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry, State of Wyoming Forestry Division, Weston Natural Resource Conservation District, Weston County Weed & Pest, USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDA Forest Service and Neiman Timber Company.

Additional information on Mountain Pine Beetles can be found at:
<http://www.beatthebeetles.com/>.

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