

# WHAT'S KILLING THE TREES?

The native *mountain pine beetle*, no bigger than a grain of rice, is responsible for killing millions of acres of pine trees in the western United States. The fast-moving beetle epidemic is bigger than any other in Central Rockies recorded history.

## Why?

This beetle epidemic was triggered by an extended drought, warmer winters, and aging forests. The resulting weak trees are perfect habitat for beetles, causing their populations to explode. As you travel through the forest, you may see entire landscapes turning red and brown as trees die.

## How?

Beetles bore into trees, lay eggs, and introduce a blue stain fungus which blocks the flow of water and ultimately kills the tree. Adult beetles emerge from infested trees the following summer, traveling up to several miles to attack new trees.

# WHAT IS BEING DONE?

Although the beetle epidemic cannot be stopped, steps are being taken to lessen the impacts. Foresters are able to protect some high value areas, such as homes and campgrounds, by removing recently infested trees and using insecticides on individual trees.

## What about fire danger?

This significant change in the forest landscape will influence fire behavior. The U.S. Forest Service, other agencies, local communities, and property owners are working together to remove dead, dying, and hazardous trees. This will help protect people, roads, trails, powerlines, campgrounds, other facilities, and critical watersheds.

# WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?

## A Fresh Start ~ The Next Forest

When the beetles run out of mature trees to infest, or beetle larvae die in an unusually cold winter, their populations will subside. Beetle epidemics are natural processes that cycle over time and are one of nature's ways of rejuvenating forests.

Mountain pine beetles don't usually attack small pines, or other tree species such as fir, aspen, or spruce. *These young trees will make up the next forest.*

For more information, please go to:  
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/bark-beetle/>

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