



Forest Health Press Conference

January 22, 2010

Legislation in Support Mountain Pine Beetle Infestation Mitigation Work

Congressional Legislation

- Senators Mark Udall (D-CO) and Jim Risch (R-ID) introduced S. 2798, the National Forest Insect and Disease Emergency bill, in November 2009 to help address impacts of insect and disease infestations in 12 western states. Among its provisions it would:
 - establish "insect and disease emergency areas" on National Forest System lands that would receive priority consideration for removal of hazardous fuels and hazard trees, and forest health restoration;
 - provide that biomass removed from emergency areas be considered a renewable fuel under the Clean Air Act;
 - allow the Forest Service to use expedited National Environmental Policy Act analysis authorities provided in the Healthy Forest Restoration Act for projects in emergency areas;
 - extend the Good Neighbor Authority, which facilitates cooperative hazardous fuel removal between the Forest Service and the State of Colorado, to all states;
 - eliminate contract cancellation funding requirements that have impeded use of multiyear stewardship contracts for fuels and restoration work; and
 - provide permanent authority for the Forest Service to enter into multiyear stewardship contracts.
- The seven House of Representatives members from Colorado introduced a companion bill, HR4398, in the House in December.
- Other congressional members are introducing bills, including Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY), who introduced a bill to make Good Neighbor Authority permanent and expand it nationwide; Rep. Cynthia Lummis (R- WY), who is working on a bill to address ecosystem restoration and water source protection issues in the West; and Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (D-SD), who introduced a bill to extend expedited NEPA authorities in the Healthy Forest Protection Act to protect infrastructure in rural communities, and facilitate forest and rangeland health restoration.
- Members of Congress also urged Secretary Vilsack to provide more funding to support efforts to deal with insect emergencies in the Rocky Mountain Region. In December, Secretary Vilsack announced that the Region would receive an additional \$40 million to address public safety concerns and forest health needs.

State Legislation

- **Intergovernmental Cooperation for the Purpose of Mitigating Wildfires (HB09-1162):** Required each local government to enter into an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) if that local government owns any land area located inside the territorial boundaries of a county, and contains at least 50-percent forestland or land that constitutes a wildland area. The bill is effective on or before July 1, 2011. The purpose of the agreement is to mitigate forest land/wildland fires that affect the contiguous land areas of the local government and county.

- **Colorado Healthy Forests and Vibrant Communities Act of 2009 (HB09-1199):** Increased efforts to address wildfire risk, provided resources to the Colorado State Forest Service to augment its technical outreach capabilities, and provided loans and grants for market-based and forest treatment solutions to reduce wildfire risk.
- **Community Wildfire Protection Plans (SB09-001):** Required the CSFS to establish guidelines and criteria for counties to consider in preparing Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) to address wildfires in fire hazard areas within the unincorporated portion of a county.
- **Civil Immunity to Persons Engaged in Emergency Response Activities (SB09-013):** Enacted the "Marc Mullenix Volunteer Firefighter Protection Act," which provides limited civil immunity for fire departments and other entities that donate surplus firefighting equipment for later use; immunity for volunteer firefighters, their commanders, and the organizations that employ them; and immunity for incident management teams, in connection with fires and other emergencies.
- **Responsibility for Responding to Wildland Fires (SB09-020):** Created a systematic, proactive approach to the management of wildland fire incidents in Colorado, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity.
- **Incentives for Volunteer Firefighters (SB09-021):** Created a fund in the Division of Fire Safety to provide tuition vouchers to qualified volunteer firefighters who are enrolled in full-time or part-time study, and who agree to serve as volunteer firefighters for four years after completing their education.
- **Removal of Statutory Limit on the Amount that may be Raised for the Purpose of Fighting Fires (SB09-105):** Removed the statutory limit on the amount that can be raised in a year by a special property tax levied by a Board of County Commissioners for the purpose of fighting specified types of fires in a county.