

Casper Mountain Forest Stewardship Association's *Natrona County Mountain*

NEWS

Fall 2015

**SPONSORED BY: Casper Mountain Forest Stewardship Association and
Wyoming State Forestry Division Cooperating**

Notes from the President

I thought readers would be interested in my sharing the history of the Casper Mountain Forest Stewardship Association. I recently realize that our association has been in existence for 35 years and that many of our readers may not know when and why it was formed.

Starting in the spring of 1980, Casper Mountain residents started seeing many of the pine trees turning red and dying. We contacted Wyoming State Forestry Division and were informed that we had a mountain pine beetle (MPB) epidemic starting to take hold on Casper Mountain. Ike Muniz, Wyoming State Forestry Division District Forester along with Jerry Buk, University of Wyoming Extension Service County agent worked with Casper Mountain landowners to organize a landowners association to help educate fellow landowners on how to control the mountain pine beetle epidemic.

The first meeting was held in the spring 1981 to organize our new association, which was named the Casper Mountain Pine Beetle Association, and to elect a board of directors. With the help of Jerry Buk, the association board started a public education campaign including MPB educational meetings, public service announcements, newsletters sent to landowners, and educational brochures. Wyoming State Forestry helped hire six project Forester's to walk Casper Mountain and mark all newly infested trees for landowners to cut down and spray with the pesticide Lindane. Through this whole process Mountain landowners came together and worked to eradicate the beetle infestation. However the number of infested trees continued to increase until the mountain received help from Mother Nature. In December, 1984 the mountain had a two week 20 below freeze which eliminated the beetle threat by killing all the larvae overwintering under the bark of the pine trees. Following that severe winter freeze the number of MPB infested trees was brought nearly to zero.

After the end of the MPB epidemic, the Association worked towards educating landowners on the need for forest management to prevent future mountain pine beetle outbreaks. Although Casper Mountain had not experienced any severe wildfires we also emphasize the need for forest management to reduce fire hazard. The organization also started Casper Mountain Arbor Day with the first celebration in June, 1984. We had the help of Natrona County 4-H clubs who had their annual summer camp on Casper Mountain at this time of year. The Association continued with Arbor Day until 2012 when we did not have a sufficient number of volunteers to continue with the annual tree planting. (continued on page 2)

Casper/Muddy Mountain Area State Land Project Update

The Wyoming State Forestry Division has been planning and implementing various forest management projects in the Casper/Muddy Mountain area. A majority of the projects fall into two main forest management categories: shaded fuelbreaks and pre-commercial thinning projects.

The state has completed 1 large and 1 small shaded fuelbreak project during the 2014 field season on Muddy Mountain adjacent to the Muddy Mountain Road encompassing 20 acres. The state has also implemented another 9 acre shaded fuelbreak adjacent to the Muddy Mountain Road during the 2015 field season. Layout and marking has been completed on another small 5 acre fuelbreak project, again located along the Muddy Mountain Road. This 5 acre project will be implemented during the 2016 field season. These fuelbreaks thin out lodgepole & limber pine trees and prune residual leave trees. The projects create space between crowns of residual trees, which will further increase tree health. The disposal of residual slash and pruning of lower branches will reduce wildfire risks adjacent to the access road by lowering ground fire potential and intensity.

The state completed a small pre-commercial thinning project (small diameter trees) during the 2015 field season on Muddy Mountain. The thinning project was thinned to an 8 feet by 8 feet tree spacing and encompassed a total of 4 acres. This project will greatly increase tree health in this area by reducing stocking levels, which will result in more water & nutrients available to residual trees. The thinning will also reduce wildfire hazards within the stand by increasing space between crowns of residual trees.

The state will work with the Wyoming State Helitack crew to conduct shaded fuelbreak maintenance on Casper Mountain Road, Tower Hill and West End Shaded Fuelbreak Project areas during the 2016 field season. The maintenance work will include removal of dead and wind thrown trees, as well as large broken branches. Residual material and slash will be hauled to the slash pile for burning.

(Casper Mountain Forest Stewardship History continued from page 1)

Through the 1990s the Association continued with our outreach and education program which included yearly annual Association business and educational meetings, four newsletters a year, and various workshops on forest management. In May, 1995 Casper Mountain experienced a 60 inch heavy snow storm that resulted in the breakage of well over 250,000 trees on the top of the Mountain. As a result of this, the Association worked as an intermediary to coordinate cleanup between landowners and Wyoming State Forestry Division. This tremendous amount of damaged trees and slash caused a spike of ips beetles and increased fire danger. Through the remainder of the 1990 your association continued to work with landowners to manage and protect their forest. (Part 2 of this history will continue in the Spring 2016 newsletter.)

Sam Weaver, CMFSA President

Casper Mountain Fire Department

Casper Mountain Volunteer Fire Department is an all-volunteer fire department serving the Casper Mountain area. We meet every Tuesday night at 7:00 pm at the fire hall located at 1000 Lemmers Road. Please stop by and visit one of these nights or call one of the numbers in our Be A Volunteer promotion. You may or may not have seen us training or responding to a call in your area, but we do stay busy and it takes volunteers like you to keep the mountain safe.

Although this year was relatively quiet on the mountain, we cannot say that for our neighboring communities. Fifty MPH wind driven grass fires tested the limits of county wide fire-fighting resources. We responded to Bar Nunn, Evansville, and Casper's wildland fires that destroyed several outbuildings and homes. These fires remind us that property and personal preparation is the key when a fire is located in your area.

Interacting with property owners on these fires reinforced my belief in a little planning saves lives and property. Have you reviewed your defensible space plan lately? These fires again proved an effective defensible space saves structures and property. Have you viewed your Emergency Plan Checklist? Do you have a plan for how your family will stay connected during and after an emergency? How will valuables be handled? How will you care for your animals? This and more information can be found at www.firewisewyoming.com.

On behalf of the department and myself, be safe and we will see you on the mountain.

Casper Mountain Fire Chief
Mike Huber



White Pine Blister Rust Infestations

White Pine Blister Rust (WPBR) infestation of limber pine continues to be an issue on Casper and Muddy Mountain. White Pine Blister Rust was introduced to the United States from Europe in the early 1900's. The disease had a devastating effect on western white pine, since they had not evolved together with the disease. WPBR also attacks other five needle pines such as whitebark pine, eastern white pine, sugar pine and limber pine. Limber pine is the only five needle pine on Casper and Muddy Mountain and WPBR infestations are increasing in all age classes.

Blister rust will not spread from tree to tree. It requires a shrub in the genus *Ribes* (gooseberry & currents) as an alternate host to complete its life cycle. The disease goes from *Ribes* to pine to *Ribes* and so on. The rust infects five needle pine tree through the needles. The fungus spreads down the branch to the main stem of the tree. The fungus will eventually kill the branch or main stem above the infected area. Symptoms of infestation are cankers with orange spores or bleeding of sap at the cankers site. This can appear anywhere on the tree from the small branches to the main stem. When branches are infected the yellowing of the needles or flagging in a portion of the branch may be seen. Dead branches and main stems above the canker is also a sign of infestation. An extreme amount of sap can bleed from a canker or very little, so inspection of limber pine must be thorough to find the small infestations.



A 14 inch diameter limber pine with a large canker on the main stem is bleeding an excessive amount of sap, which is dropping down on the lower foliage of the tree.

There are no proven control techniques for WPBR, so the best course of action is identification and maintenance. Look for infested branches & needles and prune off infected branches or portions of branches above or inside (toward the tree) of the canker. Make sure to sterilize the pruning saw between cuts as not to spread the fungus from tree to tree. If the tree is infested at the main stem, maintenance will not help the tree. Removal is the best option, since a topped tree is vulnerable to diseases and rot.

Remember, if you have limber pine on your property it is imperative that you inspect your limber pine annually for infestations. Treat or remove infested trees to reduce the amount of spores available on your property as to reduce possible future infestations. Again, this disease affects all age classes of limber pine from the little 3 foot tree to the large 50 foot tree, so make sure to inspect them all.

Wood Burning Stove Checklist

Enjoying the thorough warmth of a wood burning fire from your wood stove is extra warming when you possess the peace of mind knowing the stove is safe. The only way to ensure safety with your wood stove is by performing an annual inspection. Be safe and accomplish a thorough inspection each year of your wood heating appliance.

- **Gaskets** – Every wood stove is built with a door through which you insert your wood fuel. Doors come with a braided, rope-like gasket. In time, this gasket becomes loose, or completely burned off. Poke at the gasket. If it easily comes loose, buy a replacement fiberglass gasket and some gasket cement. Pull out the old gasket, cut new gasket material to the proper size, apply the cement and pop your new gasket into place.
- **Hinges** – Check all hinges on these same doors. Usually, the hinge is nothing more than a pin that the door swings on. If they're severely worn, replace them with replacement hinges from the wood stove manufacturer, or from a hardware store.
- **Glass** – Tempered glass is used in wood stove doors. Inspect it for cracks. If cracked, replace it with tempered glass from the manufacturer. If the glass is black, clean it. Glass that blackens in one day indicates poor fire conditions, such as burning green firewood, or not allowing enough oxygen into the firebox during combustion.
- **Metal Fatigue** – Check the structural integrity of the metal in the stove. Look for cracks, especially in welds and seams. This is especially important for a non-EPA-certified wood stove that is probably of a pre-1988 era.
- **Fire Bricks** – Most wood stoves use fire bricks in the fire box. They crack with excessive heat. Sometimes, it's just their time to crack. A cracked fire brick allows heat to penetrate metal beyond the brick, which can lead to metal fatigue described above. Fire bricks are cheap compared to the price of a new stove. Loosen the fire brick retainer, remove the old broken bricks and replace them with new fire bricks.
- **Air Controls** – Carefully turn or slide adjustments and watch to make sure all air control mechanisms are free from wood chips, ash or residue. Fix any fatigued parts to ensure that air controls work freely.
- **Secondary Air Holes** – Check secondary air holes built into your stove to allow air flow. If necessary, clean all of the air holes with a wire brush. When secondary air holes fail to allow air through, secondary combustion is limited and chimney creosote builds more easily.
- **Baffle Warp** – Most wood stoves employ a metal or cast iron baffle above the fire box. Check to see if the baffle is warped. If so, replace it with a new baffle from your stove's manufacturer.
- **Stove Pipe & Damper** – Inspect your stove pipe for rust. Steel wool will clean minor rust. If you find major rust, replace the pipe. Disassemble the stove pipe sections and clean soot and creosote from its interior with a stout wire brush. Inspect the damper for warpage and replace, if necessary.

Chimney – Clean the chimney at the start of every fire season, no matter how clean you think the chimney is. Creosote always builds up inside chimneys. Animals and birds might have made a nest inside. Always perform chimney cleaning. Inspection and cleaning should be performed regularly throughout the burning season, too. Only use a metal warm ash vacuum and place all ash in a metal container.

Wildfire Mitigation Projects on Casper Mountain

The Natrona County Wildfire Mitigation Project, funded by the National Fire Plan (NFP), continues to implement defensible space and fuel treatment projects on Casper Mountain and Natrona County. The wildfire mitigation projects including defensible space and fuel mitigation projects provide a cost share grant for private landers. The cost of shaded fuel breaks is covered a grant. Following are projects started and/or completed this summer.

Defensible Space / Fuel Treatment Plans

The Wildfire Mitigation Cost Share Program is available to Natrona County Forested property owners. Defensible Space is thinning trees, pruning branches, and clearing slash and ground fuels in a 100 foot radius around a home or cabin. Property owners and a forest resource specialist will work together to plan the defensible space area, with the landowner or a contractor completing the project.

Since 2000, 322 Defensible Space Plans (DSP) have been created. 264 DSP have been completed and 58 DSP are waiting completion. In 2015, 14 Defensible Space Plans were created and 16 DSP have been completed. Two years are allowed for completion of the Defensible Space Plans.

Shaded Fuel Breaks

A shaded fuel break is a wildfire control strategy, similar to a fire break except that some trees are left in the fire break zone. Fuel breaks have been constructed in key areas on Casper Mountain to break up the continuous fuel and create a line where a spreading wildfire might be stopped. As of 2015, six Shaded Fuel Breaks are in various stages of completion. The West Garden Creek and Archery Range Shaded Fuel Breaks have recently been completed. The Crooked Pine and Hogadon Ski Area Lower Slope Shaded Fuel Breaks have been contracted. The Aspens Subdivision and Peterson Trail Shaded Fuel Breaks are in the planning stages.

NFP Cost-Share Practice Rates

PRACTICE	COST-SHARE%	MAXIMUM Practice Cost	Cost-Share Rate NOT TO EXCEED
Defensible Space	50%	\$4,200/treatment	\$2,100/treatment
Fuel Treatment	50%	\$1,600/acre	\$800/acre
Fuel Breaks	50%	\$1,800.00/acre	\$900/acre

DEFENSIBLE SPACE—Thinning, pruning, and fuels removal, as prescribed by the Wildfire Mitigation Plan by a Resource Professional, in a circular area not less than 100 feet from the exterior of a residence or business structure. Defensible Space Rate can also be used for planned construction site of a residence or business structure.

FUEL TREATMENT—Thinning, pruning, and fuel removal in areas other than the defensible space described above, as prescribed by the Wildfire Mitigation Plan written by a Resource Professional. Slash shall be removed from the site, chipped or piled for burning.

FUEL BREAK—Thinning, pruning and fuel removal in key areas identified by a Resource Professional and Wildfire Mitigation Plan. Key areas being those identified to support wildland firefighting suppression actions. Slash shall be removed from the site, chipped or piled for burning. Fuel breaks shall be at least three contiguous acres in area to qualify.

Landowners may hire a contractor or complete the work themselves. Records are to be kept of landowner in-kind hours and are to be turned in to the County Firewise Program upon completion of the practice. Contact the Natrona County Firewise Office at (307) 234-6116 to schedule an appointment for developing a Defensible Space Plan for your property.



Natrona County Mountain NEWS

Casper Mountain Forest Stewardship Association's
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Casper, Wyoming 82602-0281

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Please do not forget to pay your dues!

New Member Renew Member

Name _____

Permanent Address _____ Zip Code _____

Mountain Address or Property Location

_____ Zip Code _____

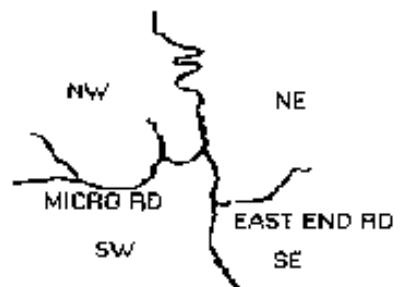
Phone (home) _____ (work) _____

Name of spouse

Are you a landowner Yes No Is your spouse Yes No

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP \$15.00 (January 1 to December 31)
Please attach check payable to: (contributions are tax deductible)

Casper Mountain Forest Stewardship Association
P.O. Box 281
Casper, WY 82602-0281 Receipt Requested: Yes No



In what division is your land located?

NW <input type="checkbox"/>	Rattlesnake Mtns <input type="checkbox"/>
SW <input type="checkbox"/>	South Bighorns <input type="checkbox"/>
NE <input type="checkbox"/>	Muddy Mountain <input type="checkbox"/>
SE <input type="checkbox"/>	