



NEWS RELEASE

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Burned and blown-down forests across Idaho treated to prevent bark beetle infestation

(COEUR D'ALENE) – More than 830 acres of forested State lands affected by wildfire or wind blow-down events were treated this spring to prevent infestations of bark beetles.

Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) employees stapled 11,475 “bubble capsules” filled with a pheromone produced by Douglas-fir beetles to trees affected by the Clearwater Complex Fire near Kamiah and the Tepee Springs Fire near Riggins in 2015. Several infested stands near Rexburg in eastern Idaho also were treated.

A major concern to forest managers after wildfires or wind blow-down events is the buildup of bark beetle populations in dead or dying trees. The bark beetles may attack and kill healthy trees in adjacent areas.

Fortunately, in some cases, vulnerable trees can be protected from attacks with environmentally-friendly bark beetle deterrent pheromones. MCH (3-methylcyclohex-2-en-1-one) is a deterrent pheromone that is naturally produced by Douglas-fir beetles. When their host tree is fully occupied, the beetles release MCH to signal to incoming Douglas-fir beetles that there is “no vacancy” in the host tree. Potential invaders bypass the tree, recognizing it as an unsuitable host.

MCH has been synthesized and is available in small bubble capsules that can be stapled to Douglas-fir trees. MCH bubble capsules can protect trees from attack by tricking Douglas-fir beetles into thinking healthy trees have already been fully attacked. Would-be attackers move on, and their prolonged search for an unprotected host puts the beetles at higher risk of mortality from exhaustion or predators, reducing the number of attacks in MCH-treated areas.

The IDL and USFS employees’ work provides one year of protection for these vulnerable stands. Application of MCH bubble capsules must be completed before the beetles start flying in spring.

This year’s efforts add to the 600 acres treated in 2017. The project is supported in part by grant dollars from the USFS Western Bark Beetle Grant Program.

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NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:

Jennifer Russell, IDL Cooperative Grants Project Coordinator

208-666-8669 or jrussell@idl.idaho.gov