

Colorado State University Libraries
Colorado State Forest Service
Streaming Media
Transcription of Colorado's forests: past, present and future

Item Metadata

Collection: Streaming Media
Creator: Mike Hooker, narrator; Mike Lester, speaker; Joe Duda, speaker; Ellen Roberts, speaker; Mike King, speaker; Dave Root, speaker; Brian Ferebee, speaker; Randy Fischer, speaker
Title: Colorado's forests: past, present and future
Date: 2014 June 16
File Name: CSFS_Part1-ColoForests-P-P-F.mp4
Transcript Provided By: Adobe Premiere Pro 2026

BEGIN TRANSCRIPTION

00:00:10:06 - 00:00:16:07

Unknown

We were already advised that we lost those two structures.

00:00:16:10 - 00:00:50:17

Unknown

Colorado's forests are in jeopardy, facing multiple threats from recent wildfires, the most destructive in Colorado's history, to unprecedented outbreaks of bark beetles, tiny insects that have killed millions of trees in Colorado. The scale and destructiveness are wildfires. The scope of the insect disease outbreaks, the overcrowded nature of our forest. This is new. This is different. These troubles are compounded by a struggling forest products industry that, if more robust, could have made forest conditions less prone to threats like beetles and wildfire.

00:00:50:18 - 00:01:07:27

Unknown

I've been doing forestry in Colorado for 30 years, and I've never seen the the culmination of events, insect fire and disease that we're seeing in the last 5 or 10 years.

00:01:08:00 - 00:01:40:08

Unknown

In 2012, thousand of residents in the western edge of Colorado Springs evacuated as the Waldo Canyon fire swept into town. In a state that tourism is a big attraction, it's never a good idea to have us show up on the nightly news. Day after day, going up and smoke. The Black Forest fire burned 14,000 acres, destroyed or damaged more than 500 homes, and resulted in a total property loss of more than \$300 million.

00:01:40:11 - 00:02:06:24

Unknown

I'm fortunate. I think we're going to it's going to become more the norm to see those kinds of fires. What's occurring throughout the Rocky Mountain West is another year of monumental historic fires, and I think that will become the trend. We simply have a fuel load in our forest that

lends itself to these fires that are uncharacteristic and simply beyond what we've seen in recent history.

00:02:06:27 - 00:02:30:07

Unknown

Fuels have accumulated so much in these overgrown forests that when they burn, the fire climbs up into the treetops and can quickly become a disastrous crown fire. Some fires burn at such a high temperature that they cause severe and long lasting environmental damage, including heavy flooding and erosion. In the aftermath of intense burns.

00:02:30:09 - 00:02:53:22

Unknown

So how did we get to this point? Over the last century, many of our forests have become unhealthy and overcrowded. 100 years ago, things were very different. Fire was a natural part of the ecosystem. Forests in Colorado were more diverse and evolved with natural cycles of wildfire and insect and disease outbreaks. But changes in our values led to a shift in management of these lands.

00:02:53:23 - 00:03:15:12

Unknown

One of the new management directives required unconditional fire suppression after deadly wildfires claimed nearly 100 lives and millions of acres of forest in the early 1900s. After we'd had those tremendous fires in the early part of the 20th century, the Forest Service is really keen on getting fires put out. Matter of fact, they had what they called the 10:00 rule that every fire had to be out by 10:00.

00:03:15:13 - 00:03:39:05

Unknown

Of course they weren't, but that was the attempt. Now what that did in fire deputy ecosystems, it removed that thinning out of the of the force. The force got thicker and thicker. You know, 100 years of fire suppression. Let the forests get totally out of whack to the point that any fire is more than likely to become a catastrophic ground fire.

00:03:39:06 - 00:04:05:20

Unknown

Now, the forest is very different now than it was 100 years ago. There's a tendency to look at our thick forests and think, that's the way they've always been. Absolutely. In the old days, when I saw the very thick, lush forests lush for Colorado. Anyway, I thought that was a good thing. And now I look at it and I get much more of a sense of their unhealthy.

00:04:05:21 - 00:04:21:29

Unknown

It shouldn't be like that. We need to convince people that what they're seeing in our forests is anything but natural. In fact, it's pretty darn close to unnatural.

00:04:22:01 - 00:04:50:06

Unknown

One obstacle to addressing these overly dense forests has been a struggling forest products industry. In 1970, we had a real focus on keeping our forest from being harvested or manipulated, and that was with the best of intentions as well. But again, it left us with forests that were too thick. Too many fuels. Not in a natural state. We can let natural processes dominate and see the type of results repeated again in the future.

00:04:50:06 - 00:05:08:03

Unknown

Or we can impact some of those lands, produce forest products, help maintain green forests, and set it up so that it continues to provide the values that our society expects from forest land.

00:05:08:06 - 00:05:35:21

Unknown

As fuels continue to accumulate in Colorado's forests, more and more homes are being built in the wildland urban interface, or red zone. That means we can't allow fires to burn there. So thinning trees in this red zone, where homes meet old and vulnerable forests becomes the safest option. I think first of all, we need to find an opportunity, find a way to to dedicate the resources to management of our forests that frankly, right now is not available.

00:05:35:21 - 00:05:54:24

Unknown

We see it at the federal level with the U.S. Forest Service and so much money on fire suppression in response mode that they're taking the money out of other programs, ironically, including a mitigation program that would allow us to reduce fuel loads in these areas. And so it's a it's not a good spiral that we find ourselves on.

00:05:54:26 - 00:06:27:17

Unknown

Despite limited funding, land management agencies at all levels of government are working together across boundaries to address problems when it comes to prevention. I think the more that we can do to help mitigate wildfire, I think the better off we collectively are. And I think we all acknowledge that there's going to be some wildfire on the landscape. But the more that we can do vegetation treatment to help mitigate fuels and fuel build up on the landscape as a whole, I think the better off we are and the more money that we put in prevention, the less money that we believe will have to put in suppression activities.

00:06:27:19 - 00:07:01:26

Unknown

Forest management offers a solution to many of the problems Colorado's forests face, including wildfire risks. There are definite public safety issues that need to be addressed, and I think the state of Colorado has a vital role to play in maintaining public safety. As more and more people start moving into what's called the red zone, so we really are at a turning point of our forests and what we do now and for the next ten, 20 and 30 years will really shape our forests for the future.

00:07:01:26 - 00:07:11:14

Unknown

So it's important for us to think about the actions that we take today and what we want the outcomes to be for our future generations.

END TRANSCRIPTION