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Message from the manager



As the days grow longer and signs of spring emerge, we're reminded of the vital role our forests play in Colorado's diverse landscapes. Spring is a time of renewal, but it also brings unique challenges for forest health — particularly along Colorado's Front Range, where ongoing drought conditions and a bark beetle outbreak continue to impact our forests.

The combination of dry weather and stressed trees creates ideal conditions for bark beetle infestations, which have been a growing concern for landowners in our region. These pests weaken and kill trees, further impacting wildfire risks and altering ecosystems. As we move into the warmer months, it's critical to remain vigilant about monitoring forest health and taking proactive steps to protect our valuable forest resources.

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health during the spring season and highlight the Colorado Tree Farm Program. Thank you for your continued commitment to sustainable forestry and conservation.

— Erik Castello, Forest Stewardship Program Specialist

Program updates

Upcoming deadlines

June 30, 2026: Deadline to submit a [Change of Annual Work Plan](#) to your local [CSFS field office](#). This is an opportunity to propose alternative forest management activities if you anticipate difficulties accomplishing the work identified in your annual work plan. This form will help you stay in compliance with Forest Ag, and you can find it on our website under [Forms and Policy](#). Proposed changes are not considered final until signed and approved by a CSFS forester.

Oct. 1, 2026: Deadline to complete annual work and submit paperwork and fee for continued participation.

Forest Legacy Program

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New Higher Ground Headwaters Ranch conservation easement

The Colorado State Forest Service and partners, including the U.S. Forest Service Forest Legacy Program, signed a conservation easement to protect 3,386 acres of important forested and riparian habitat for both aquatic and terrestrial wildlife in Gunnison County.

“This 3,000 acre conservation easement is a real win for all Colorado residents,” said Matt McCombs, state forester and director of the Colorado State Forest Service. “Keeping forests as forests is critical for maintaining overall forest health and habitat connectivity as well as preserving the Colorado way of life. We appreciate the private landowners who want to ensure their property remains as beneficial wildlife habitat and pristine headwaters.”

[Read the whole story](#)

What's bugging your trees



2025 Report on the Health of Colorado's Forests

On May 19 the CSFS released the *2025 Report on the Health of Colorado's Forests* that describes which insects and diseases are the biggest forest health issues in the state, with mountain pine beetle and emerald ash borer chief among them.

Other key takeaways

- **Western spruce budworm** – the most widespread forest pest in 2024 – continues to cause extensive and intense damage to Douglas-fir and low-elevation mixed-conifer forests.
- **Western balsam bark beetle** – the deadliest forest pest in 2024 – remains active in high-elevation spruce-fir forests.
- **Douglas-fir beetle** continues to kill Douglas-fir trees in parts of Pitkin, Fremont and Teller counties and most counties in central and southern Colorado.
- **Roundheaded pine beetle** and associated native bark beetles are expanding in ponderosa pine forests in the southwestern reaches of Colorado.
- **Mountain pine beetle** continues to impact lodgepole pine in Gunnison County and forests in the Mosquito Range in Chaffee and Park counties, as well as areas of southwestern Colorado.

[Read the 2025 Report on the Health of Colorado's Forests](#)

Landowner spotlight



Colorado Outstanding Logger of the Year

Custom Design Fabricators in Livermore received the Colorado Outstanding Logger of the Year award in April. Each year the **Colorado Timber Industry Association** and **Colorado Tree Farm Committee** recognize a logger or logging company that does an outstanding job of harvesting timber in Colorado.

This year the **Larimer Conservation District** nominated Custom Design Fabricators, owned by the Becketts, for this award due to their positive, can-do attitude, constant professionalism, excellent safety record, high-quality work and willingness to educate neighbors and visitors. The Becketts are the best of the best!

Grow your knowledge



Introducing Colorado Family Forests

A new name, same commitment to sustainability

Exciting changes are happening in Colorado's forestry community! The Colorado Tree Farm Program is transitioning to **Colorado Family Forests** to better reflect how private landowners across the state engage with and manage their forestlands. This new name highlights the program's focus on supporting private landowners in managing their forests sustainably while fostering a sense of community among forest stewards.

What's changing?

While the name is new, the program's core principles remain the same. Current participants in the Colorado Tree Farm program will maintain their status and no additional actions are required to continue participation. The American Tree Farm System (ATFS) [Standards of Sustainability](#) will continue to serve as the foundation for all participation, ensuring that forest management practices align with the principles of managing forests for wildlife, recreation, water and wood while promoting long-term forest health and productivity.

Who can participate?

The Colorado Family Forest Program is open to landowners of any size forested parcel, encouraging broad participation in sustainable forestry. Parcels of 10 or more forested acres can become a Certified Family Forest if they have a Stewardship Plan that meets ATFS Standards of Sustainability.

Benefits of participation

Colorado Family Forests participants enjoy many benefits:

- **Family forest sign:** Showcase your commitment to sustainable forestry on your property.

- **Awards and celebrations:** Eligible landowners can compete for the Family Forest of the Year Award and participate in in-person celebrations.
- **Networking opportunities:** Connect with other forest landowners to share resources, equipment and contractors, and collaborate with local land management groups.

Stay connected

We're excited to help grow a thriving network of Colorado forest landowners who can support each other and work together to protect our forests. The [ATFS website](#) has helpful information on what a Certified Family Forest is and how the program functions. Stay tuned to these newsletters and [visit our new website](#) for updates on upcoming Colorado Family Forest community events and opportunities to get involved.

Thanks, Mike!



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If you've been involved in Forest Ag in the northern Colorado in the past 35 years, you likely know Mike Hughes. His commitment to forestry and helping local landowners is legendary. Many people gathered to see him off from the Borden Memorial Forest in Larimer County on March 31. His expertise, thoughtfulness and work ethic are incomparable and will be missed!

We wish you the best in your well-earned, much-deserved retirement, Mike!



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Physical address

3843 W. LaPorte Ave.
CSU Foothills Campus, Bldg. 1060
Fort Collins, CO 80521

Mailing address

5060 Campus Delivery Bldg 1060
Fort Collins, CO 80523-5060
970-491-6303
csfs_fmd@mail.colostate.edu

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