COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

September 23, 2022

MPHOA/Kevin St. Croix,

In the summer of 2022 I conducted several site visits within the Mt. Princeton HOA neighborhood for the purpose of evaluating several forest health concerns. Being that the neighborhood is forested mostly with pinon pines, the major forest health concern would be a widespread pinon IPS beetle infestation. During my site visits to the neighborhood, I found some low level pinon needle scale infestations and what seemed to be general drought stress among the pinon pines throughout the area. Drought stress being somewhat of an ethereal diagnosis we wanted to get a second opinion from an insect and disease expert, so we called on our agency's entomologist, Dan West. On September 22, 2022 Dan West visited the neighborhood, met with several homeowners, and evaluated the areas of most concern.

During the September 22 visit, a small pinon IPS beetle infestation was found in some of the trees that had been evaluated earlier in the summer and a ponderosa pine along Hancock Ln. was found to have been significantly damaged from magnesium chloride application on the road. Pinon IPS beetles are often secondary pests, meaning that they enter trees that have already been stressed. This was exactly the case in the infestation found in the neighborhood; the trees had been stressed from lack of water, had low levels of pinon needle scale earlier in the summer, and IPS beetles had likely entered in the weeks leading up to our visit. We recommended the removal of the infested trees and close monitoring of neighboring trees. Dan West found no other underlying issues associated with the health of the pinon pines in the neighborhood, and chalked the general stress of the trees in the area up to drought stress.

Given central Colorado's extended drought conditions and less than desirable snow pack in recent years, it is not surprising to find pinon pines struggling from the effects of lacking water. These conditions are mimicked in almost all of the pinon-juniper forests throughout Chaffee County. Homeowners can supplement with periodic watering of their pinon pines, but must be careful not to overwater – 5-10 gallons per week per tree is sufficient. While insect, disease, and stress effects on trees is not desirable for homeowners, these are all natural processes that we expect to find in any forest; healthy or otherwise. It is important to closely monitor trees showing signs of stress so that potential problems do not become widespread – just as the small IPS beetle infestation was caught before it spread to more than two trees. The CSFS Salida Field Office is happy to continue MPHOA in their forest health and wildfire mititgation efforts, and please continue to reach out when questions arise.

Best,

Josh Kuehn
Forester, CSFS Salida FO
970-294-1117
Josh.kuehn@colostate.edu