

Ripping Bark

By Cheryl and Chuck Hanson

Most people who own forested mountain property in Larimer County are facing a growing Mountain Pine Beetle infestation problem. For our part, we are losing Ponderosa Pine and Lodge pole Pine from MPB. We are trying to put up a “*good fight*” but only time will tell if we are winning. Think Positive!

One area most puzzled over was a steep, north facing slopes with difficult access, walk in, walk out. This area was almost exclusively lodge pole pine and had a fair amount of mistletoe. An area approximately ½ acre in size had fresh beetle evidence in almost all the trees. The trees could be cut down but could not be gotten out for disposal.

A “rip the bark” process may be used in this situation. This procedure is intended to change the living environment of the beetle such that the life cycle is disrupted and a high percentage of beetles fail to reach the adult stage. This environment change is achieved by removing the moisture from the trees under the bark where the beetle is laying eggs and reproducing. The “Rip the Bark” process, as implemented, is as follows:



As soon as the MPB flight appeared to be subsiding in late summer, all affected trees are marked. After flight ceases for the summer (late Sept.) the affected trees are cut down and the limbs removed. After limb removal, the bark is cut lengthwise the full length of the tree in about 2 or 2 ½ inch increments all the way around the tree. This typically required bucking the tree into manageable lengths for rolling, etc. The bark ripping is done with the chain saw and it must go through the bark and slightly into the wood. This groove in the bark allows very rapid loss of moisture from the bark and immediately under the bark.



After the tree bark is completely ripped, stack the tree pieces to aid in rapid drying. To facilitate this, cut up a dead tree to provide a base for the stack. Stack the first layer of tree lengths on the dead tree base in one direction. A second layer is stacked in the opposite direction and a third tier again switching directions, etc. This allows air to flow between the layers. Continue this stacking as high as you wish, as long as the stack will stand.

After all trees are ripped and stacked, they will remain where they are until the next MPB flight occurs.

This process should be completed by late winter to allow sufficient time to completely dry the tree before flight time.

This method of beetle control is time consuming. If the number of trees that requires treating is large, it might be wise to rip the bark as high as possible on the standing trees to allow the drying process to begin. After this is accomplished on all affected trees return to each tree and finish the procedure as described above.

There is no guarantee that this procedure will eliminate your beetle problem but in difficult terrain it may adversely impact the reproduction cycle such that the beetle problem should be greatly reduced.

