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Tree farmers group forming in Grand County

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More than 30 people attended Saturday's meeting in Granby to discuss starting a tree farmers' organization in Grand County.

Speakers ranged from foresters to tree farmers who related success stories from other counties.

"The idea is not just for people who have acreage but anyone who has trees," said meeting organizer Don McDavid.

"We have issues since we didn't do proper forest management in the last 100 years. We don't want a repeat of what is happening now," he said.

He organized the meeting to bring people together to grow trees and to be part of an organization for forest health.

He is asking people to sign up for a committee and get involved in the group, which he envisions meeting four times a year and having a speaker for each meeting to talk about relevant topics. The focus will be on education.

"There is a benefit to forming a group and meeting regularly," said Wes Rutt, education chair of the Colorado Tree Farmers.

"The group can bring in people who are experts. It's easier to talk to a group instead of individuals," he said.

Rutt suggests sharing information about contractors and suppliers, and



Don McDavid, a Tabernash resident, is forming a Tree Farmers Association in Grand County.

to take tours of other properties as a means to success.

As a tree farmer and organizer of tree farmers, Rutt wants to be a resource for the newly forming group.

"If you need any ideas, I have a million of them," said Rutt. He also has a YouTube channel.

Jacob McCarthy, a state forester, spoke about the benefits of forming a group and how they can become proactive with forest management.

The pine beetle epidemic was a natural process, he said. In 1930 land-management organizations began to suppress fire and didn't replace the process.

"What are we going to do so we don't set up this situation again in 30 years?" he asked.

The state Forest Service helps private landowners with land management plans. Tools are available on the agency's website to assist in writing a land management plan.

"Currently there are 10 tree farmers in Grand County," said Ryan McNertney, the state forester supervising the land owner tree program out of the Granby office.

Starting a tree farmer organization is a great way for land owners to talk to each other about what has worked - or not worked, he said.

Starting young

Partnering with the new group is Project Learning Tree, facilitated by Hannah Schechter, at the BLM, Kremmling Office. Schechter will coordinate tree donations from the new group and develop cooperative projects for student to learn about planting trees.

Next step

The next step for the fledgling tree farmer group will be to meet again in July, form committees, determine a speaker and topic. The committees will determine the official name of the organization. McDavid will be sending an e-mail to all participants this week.

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