

Wildfire and Forest Health in Grand County

It's not if but when Grand County will experience a catastrophic wildfire. Before fire suppression, a lightning strike would burn several thousand acres and then burn out naturally, leaving a patchwork of unevenly aged forest. Many years ago our Lodge Pole forests in Grand County were clear cut and left to regenerate naturally. We inherited an evenly aged forest. Recently, our Lodge Pole forests resembled a nursing home with no one having had the flu shot. The Mountain Pine Beetle has always been around; we created the conditions that led to the massive epidemic. It doesn't matter that climate change may have played a part. Our Lodge Pole forests were past reasonable life expectancy.

We created the conditions for the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic in our forests by 100 years of fire suppression and not replacing what naturally dies in spot fires with logging. We got where we are by unwise forest policies for many generations, fire suppression and little logging. We have just experienced the loss of our Lodge Pole forests. To do better in the future will take the active involvement of more than the forest community. Grand County has always been an active, vibrant community. We don't need to repeat past mistakes.

There will be a meeting on Thursday, April 18, where these issues are addressed. Our speaker, Lyle Laverty, has been the Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Regional Forester of the Rocky Mountain Region U.S. Forest Service, and responsible for the leadership and implementation of the National Fire Plan on more than 191,000,000 acres of National Forest. Lyle will review where Grand County's forests are now. The changes in the landscape the MPB has made, and give his assessment of where our forest health is and help guide us moving forward.

This will help us to start to shape our forests' future and learn from our past mistakes. Come and be involved in making our forests green again at 7:00 PM, April 18 at the Granby fire station #1. See you there.