



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Mount Rushmore
National Memorial

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Mount Rushmore National Memorial News Release

Mount Rushmore Develops Action Plan to Address Mountain Pine Beetle Infestation

(Keystone, S.D.) Mount Rushmore National Memorial has assembled a National Park Service Rapid Resource Assessment Team (RRAT) to create an action plan to address the Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) epidemic that is causing ponderosa pine mortality throughout the Black Hills. Working with area agencies, the memorial is developing an aggressive plan to slow and hopefully mitigate the movement of the pine beetle into the memorial.

On February 23, the action team and memorial staff met with local and regional specialists from Custer State Park, South Dakota Department of Agriculture - Wildland Fire Suppression Division, South Dakota State University, United States Geological Survey, United States Forest Service, and entomology and forest health professionals to begin drafting the action plan. The group discussed the current condition of MPB in the central Black Hills, identified issues and concerns surrounding the beetle problem, and explored treatment options and resources available to address the outbreak. To date, the park has identified pockets of trees affected by the mountain pine beetle, and have taken action to remove some of them from the park for decontamination.

Because the mountain pine beetle epidemic has the potential to affect some of the memorial's fundamental resources, including the forested setting of the sculpture, old growth ponderosa pine, and scenic vistas, the park's management team is considering options to mitigate effects while returning the forest to a more natural, historic and sustainable landscape.

Integrating scientific research information, current condition reports, and experience from area specialists, the memorial's Rapid Resource Assessment Team has compiled an action plan that combats the mountain pine beetle on several fronts. Included for consideration in the DRAFT plan are steps to prevent infestation of high value trees within visitor use areas that help maintain

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the visual landscape around the sculpture, measures to seek out and attack mountain pine beetles that have already entered the park, and proactive thinning and buffering of the memorial's forest against the encroaching mountain pine beetle population. These actions are in concert with projects being carried out by Custer State Park and the Black Hills National Forest to mitigate the mountain pine beetle infestation. Superintendent Gerard Baker states, "This level of cooperation among partner land management agencies and experts is critical to helping the National Park Service explore and develop effective methods to keep this infestation from getting out of control within memorial grounds. This landscape has been and continues to be treasured by many cultures over the ages and we have a responsibility to preserve the unique natural resources in the park and the Black Hills."

While mountain pine beetles are native to the Black Hills ecosystem, forests stressed by drought, warm winters, and other environmental factors have contributed to a higher than normal beetle population leading to the local epidemic. This is causing an imbalance in the forest ecosystem and a dangerous fire risk for the Black Hills.

"The issue of Mountain Pine Beetle in the Black Hills is severe, and the landscapes are breathtaking. This week we have brought a team of resource and policy professionals to the memorial, to work with local area experts to develop a plan that addresses the presence of Mountain Pine Beetle. The plan must be professionally credible, actionable, and fundable in order to succeed. And the outcomes must be positive. We hope we are able to make a difference for this outstanding area, and for the people who love and respect it. Here at the memorial, the landscape, and the sculpture are of local, regional and national significance, and the memorial is small enough in size, that aggressive action on the ground is possible. Indeed some of the actions recommended in the plan could be completed in the first 100 days. The plan will be open to public review and we are very interested in what the public has to say regarding our recommended approach," says Chris Holbeck, RRAT team leader.

The public is invited to review the DRAFT plan online and submit comments through the National Park Service's Park Planning website. The plan, still in development, should be posted by March 1st. The website, <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>, will contain information on the action plan and provide an avenue for public comment on the project. To make a comment online, please go to the planning website, search by park name "Mount Rushmore NMem" and click on

the project title “Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan.” Comments can be made by clicking on “Open for Public Comment” and then following the prompts. The website is available for public comment until March 15, 2010. Copies of the plan will also be available for viewing at the Mount Rushmore Information Center, located at the memorial, until March 15.

The memorial is working within the scope of National Park Service Management Policies and regulations to develop the plan, and will continue planning, consultation with public, partners, and neighbor agencies throughout the project to maintain a cooperative, interagency, multi-partner effort to address the current mountain pine beetle epidemic.

Comments on the action plan may be mailed to:

Pine Beetle Management Plan
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