

## Ips Beetle on Loghill

The Ips Beetle will always be a “problem” in the Loghill area. You have a highly dense Pinon and Juniper forest. The thicker it gets, the more the beetle will try to do its job of thinning it back to its appropriate and healthy carrying capacity. Carrying capacity for trees is very similar to carrying capacity for wildlife. Any given area can only provide so much to the occupants within it. When the area becomes maxed out on trying to provide for too many, Mother Nature has ways of reducing the burden. One of those ways is with the Pinon Ips beetle. Pinon Ips beetles key in on stressed Pinon trees that need to be eliminated so that others may grow more vigorously.

Other ways Mother Nature may regulate the balance of her forests include wildfire, disease and other insects. Humans also have an influence on the health of our forests, either positive or negative. Eliminating Mother Nature’s ways of regulating what she can support by spraying the beetles that are trying to achieve the appropriate carry capacity, will eventually throw the forest out of balance. Eventually, Mother Nature WILL win. And most likely in a very big way due to preventing her in making them on smaller scales with small fires, insects and disease. Decades of fire suppression, increased structures to protect from wildfire, past and present grazing practices, etc., have all influenced your current forest. Currently, with the overly dense amount of flammable forest fuels that now occupy your area, Mother Nature’s recovery methods will be slow and most likely painful for us to watch especially considering the amount of noxious weeds we have to contend with in this day and age. Noxious weeds will have a leg up in a denuded and sensitive landscape. They are opportunistic and have no real enemies away from their native homeland.

For these reasons, we encourage two general management approaches when it comes to your local forests. One is to let nature take its course and let the native beetles, wildfire and disease do what they do best and live with the consequences of living in a wild and natural environment.

This includes possibly losing all your trees, your home and living in a denuded landscape with the high probability of non-native, noxious weeds taking over.

The other is to strategically thin the forest to reduce the intensity with which beetles, disease and wildfire will pass. This will make the residual trees more healthy by reducing their competition with each other. You will still have the possibility of noxious non-native weeds any time you disturb soil, but on a more preventative, smaller and more manageable scale. Just like in wildfire suppression, where we fight fire with fire by “burning out” or “back-firing” we also often times seed nonnative vegetation to fight non-native vegetation. It is important to understand the general difference between native, non-native and nonnative noxious weeds when considering how to re-vegetate disturbed soil in your fragile environment. Seeding a competitive non-native, but **non-noxious** grass/forb to out-compete a far more aggressive non-native **noxious** weed (like cheatgrass) can help the native vegetation get a foothold before the non-native noxious weeds have the opportunity to do so.

In summary, on Loghill, we can no longer consider ourselves living in a world where we can let nature take its course. We have too many homes and livelihoods to protect and too many negative consequences to contend with, such as fire suppression costs, noxious weeds, uncontrollable, post-fire, erosion damage and watershed concerns.

Therefore we are proponents of pro-active forest management. Of course there will be areas that are not manageable for whatever reasons, but where we can manage for the benefit of present and future generations of people and wildlife, we should.

If you are interested in discussing your forests further, please do not hesitate to call. Our agency works with private and state lands only and we are here to offer a wide array of on-site technical support when it comes to your forests.

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