

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Colorado State Forest Service Success Story

High Priority Forest Restoration and Fuels Mitigation Grant



Forests are ever-changing. It may be the slow decomposition of a branch into humus or the quick-moving avalanche that clears all the trees in its path. From Steamboat Springs, a world-renowned ski destination, one can see changes in the forest every year. Routt County's forests are experiencing the changes associated with the current mountain pine beetle epidemic that reaches across the lodgepole pine forests of Northern Colorado.

The forests surrounding Steamboat Springs are diverse. They include expanses of lodgepole pine, hillsides of aspen, clumps of oak shrub, Engelmann spruce and sub-alpine fir at high elevations, and a mix of tree species on north-facing slopes. But the number of dead lodgepole pine in the forest continues to increase. Because of tree diversity, the changes are not as dramatic as those occurring in Grand County; nonetheless, residents in the Steamboat Springs area understand that the changes associated with beetle-killed trees are potentially more threatening to the city than the beetle epidemic.

The city of Steamboat Springs submitted a proposal to the Colorado State Forest Service for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds. The U.S. Forest Service awarded the ARRA funds to the CSFS to create jobs that address forest restoration and hazardous fuels reduction projects. The city competed successfully and was awarded \$1 million.



The purpose of the project is to reduce the amount of fuels available to an uncontained wildland fire. Most of the fuel being removed is in the form of dead lodgepole pine trees. The project – which is a team effort –



includes 138 parcels of non-federal land in the Steamboat Springs Rural Fire Protection District. First, Steamboat Springs Fire Rescue explains the project to property owners, and then two contracted forestry consultant businesses, Western Bionomics and Natural Resource Consultants, prepare the parcels. Rogue Resources, Inc., removes the trees, and the fire department, forest consultants, and the CSFS project manager all provide on-the-ground quality control.

Putting America to work.

Mike Miller, president and owner of Rogue Resources, Inc., founded the business that would become Rogue Resources in June 1993. Last fall, the company didn't have any other work lined up after completing the USFS project, so Miller was pleased to receive a contract from the city of Steamboat Springs to reduce the amount of hazardous fuels on municipal and private land. The work allowed Rogue Resources to retain its employees through the winter months.



Mike McBeth, and Rick Lambrecht, both third-generation loggers, are still Rogue Resources employees because of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant funds the city of Steamboat Springs received through the Colorado State Forest Service.

With a smile on his face, McBeth said "This is a good deal, and I am happy to have this job." Miller added, "He brought a wealth of knowledge with him. He is our expert in cable logging." McBeth runs the crew when Miller is away, helps with bids and runs the equipment.

Lambrecht operates a piece of equipment called a skidder. A skidder has a grapple or cables that lift the trunks of several cut trees off the ground and drag them from the stump to another location. The trees are piled and a separate piece of equipment removes limbs and cuts the trunks to specific lengths. He is also the yarder operator and runs a suspended cable system that removes the cut trees when the terrain is too steep for a skidder.



Don Sanford, another Rogue Resources employee, has lived in Kremmling 25 years. In 1993, he went to work for an excavation business in Kremmling and became the excavation manager. At one point, the business employed 60-65 people, but on Dec. 4, 2009, the owners had to lay off the last seven employees.

"I have never received unemployment and didn't want to start now, but without a job, I would have little choice," Sanford said. He made 30 phone calls. He called the city of Steamboat Springs and then Rogue Resources. With Sanford's past experience and the city contract, Miller was able to hire him on Dec. 9, 2009. "My daughter is still in college because of this job," Sanford said. He is married, has another daughter in high school and continues to live in Kremmling. He runs the skidder and loader, and occasionally runs the processor and sets chokers.



"The positive impact of the ARRA funds cannot be overstated," said Trent Jones, controller for Rogue Resources. Without the Steamboat Springs project, there would not be much of a company left, maybe five people. With this project, we are employing 25 people."