

**Testimony of
Dan Casey
Owner, Casey's Lumber
President, Colorado Timber Industry Association
Before Joint House Agriculture, Livestock, and Natural Resources and
Senate Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Energy Committee on
Annual Forest Health Survey Report
February 15, 2017**

Chairwomen Arndt and Chairman Sonnenberg and members of the Joint Ag Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to give testimony on forest health issues affecting Colorado. My name is Dan Casey and I am the owner of Casey's Lumber, located in Woodland Park. I have owned and operated my sawmill for over 31 years. My business provides rough-cut lumber, beams, peeled poles, wood furniture, log mantels, wood railing, and wood fencing. I am also the President for the Colorado Timber Industry Association. CTIA is an association of small, family owned businesses committed to logging, processing and performing service work in the forests of Colorado. CTIA advocates for Colorado's forest product companies and for scientific, sustainable forest management. Our members employ or contract 1,200 loggers, truckers, and mill workers and produce products valued at more than \$86 million annually.

Statistics provided by the Colorado State Forest Service this morning highlight the fact that although insect mortality overall is down from 2015, spruce beetle impacts continue to be an issue. This is because the number of spruce beetles is so large and because our spruce forests have so little diversity and resilience, thus making them susceptible to attack. Therefore, in addition to active forest management in our green forests, we need to ramp up our efforts to salvage this dead material before it deteriorates and is no longer useable. Furthermore, salvaging at least some of the dead will help reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfire. As we saw this past summer with both the Beaver Creek fire in Jackson County and the Hayden Pass fire in Fremont County, wildfires occurring in spruce beetle impacted stands become much more challenging to contain, further putting life and property in jeopardy.

Looking ahead to the "the next forest," forest product companies throughout the state are working hard in various forest management capacities to ensure that communities are protected and wood that can be utilized is turned into a usable wood product, while also creating valuable jobs. In an unprecedented victory, the Spruce Beetle Epidemic and Aspen Decline Management Response (SBEADMR) landscape level planning effort on the GMUG was finished and signed last year, allowing implementation to move forward on approximately 120,000 acres of treatment over the next eight to twelve years. This monumental project will allow the Forest Service to management the vegetation to reduce hazards to the public and infrastructure, salvage the dead and dying timber, reestablish forest cover and increase resiliency in green stands. Already, the science team working on the project has discovered that Colorado loggers are doing an excellent job protecting advanced conifer regeneration in beetle-

killed stands. Post-harvest stocking exceeds Forest Service objectives. In the case of aspen, salvage logging significantly increases the amount of regeneration.

According to the Four Corners Timber Harvest and Forest Products Industry publication, 66% of timber used by Colorado forest products companies comes from national forests. Therefore, I would like to compliment the National Forests in Colorado for meeting their targets, and in some cases, exceeding them. We recognize that this process is truly a partnership. I also want to thank the US Forest Service and the Colorado State Forest Service for working together to utilize the Good Neighbor Authority. We recognize the importance of working together to get more work done on the ground, with less money. We hope this good work will continue and looking forward we encourage the USFS to continue to utilize all of the tools in their toolbox including Good Neighbor and the Farm Bill CE insect and disease authority.

Since the 2008 recession, forest product companies have invested over \$100 million in infrastructure and equipment, giving us more capacity to achieve the new targets. But, time is of the essence and we need to be able to continue to ramp up our efforts in order to get the necessary work done on the ground, before the material no longer has value. Furthermore, there is currently a gap within Colorado, meaning that there is more wood utilization capacity than the projected Colorado target. This continued shortfall could impact the long-term sustainability of industry within Colorado. On a positive note, even though we have lost 13 product facilities since 2000, several new operations including Eagle Valley Clean Energy and the Trinchera Ranch Sawmill have come online, further increasing our capacity.

As we continue to deal with the insect epidemics across the state and the resulting mortality, I think it is important to highlight some of the lessons learned. Forest scientists have recognized the role of thinning and diversity in preventing mountain pine beetle attacks in Ponderosa Pine and Lodgepole Pine since the early 1900s. When looking at the forests with a landscape perspective, it becomes very apparent that going forward, there needs to be a new cycle of management that includes a diversity of age and size classes as well as species diversity. It is super important that we advocate managing young stands, and find ways within the Southern Rockies Lynx Amendment to allow pre-commercial thinning of young lodgepole pine stands.

In terms of the Colorado Legislature, I would like to thank you for considering a Senate Memorial Resolution in support of a new fire-funding model for the US Forest Service. As you know, the US Forest Service is spending over 50% of its budget fighting fires, leaving little funding to support other programs including recreation, wildlife, roads, and timber. We also want to thank you for considering a Senate Joint Resolution supporting the continued research, development and application of biochar from our forests. Finding uses for all of the biomass that currently needs to be removed from our forests is critical to solving this complex issue. As we look forward, I would encourage the State and the counties to get involved in the revisions of the forest plans for Colorado's National Forests and request Cooperating Agency status. These new plans will provide the roadmap of not only where we want to go in the future, but will also provide details on how to get there.

Finally, I would like to encourage members of both the House and Senate to consider the passage of SB 17-050. This bill will combine two grant programs into one, making it much more effective and efficient to implement. Furthermore, it will provide at least 6 years of funding to a grant program that has proven effective in reducing the risk of wildfire to people and property.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this perspective with you this morning. I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.