



GREATER YELLOWSTONE COORDINATING COMMITTEE

News release

Participating agencies

US Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Grand Teton National Park

Yellowstone National Park

US Fish & Wildlife Service

National Elk Refuge
Red Rock Lakes Refuge

US Department of Agriculture Forest Service

Beaverhead-Deerlodge
National Forest
Bridger-Teton National Forest
Caribou-Targhee National Forest
Custer National Forest
Gallatin National Forest
Shoshone National Forest

Chair

Steve Kallin

Executive coordinator

Virginia Kelly

Contacts: Kelly McCloskey 307.739.3678 or Brent Larson 208.557.5761

Greater Yellowstone Area Whitebark Pine Strategy

Bozeman, Mont. (May 31, 2011) – Concerned about the threats to whitebark pine, members of the Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee today signed the Whitebark Pine Strategy for the Greater Yellowstone Area.

Whitebark pine is currently threatened by both insects and diseases. Impacts from non-native white pine blister rust and native mountain pine beetle, combined with the effect of altered temperature patterns on beetle population dynamics, have resulted in significant loss of whitebark pine in the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA).

GYCC chair Steve Kallin said, “We recognize that the only way for us to address this issue is through interagency collaboration. We have to treat this problem holistically – it’s a landscape-scale problem. The bugs and rust don’t stop at an invisible agency boundary.”

Whitebark pine is considered a foundation species of high-elevation ecosystems in the GYA. It grows on harsh sites at high elevation and occurs on about 10 percent of the 24-million-acre GYA. Whitebark pine is an important species for a number of reasons.

- Once colonized, it improves conditions on otherwise inhospitable sites so other plants can grow, increasing biodiversity.
- It provides shelter and cover for wildlife and its large, nutritious seeds are an important food source for birds, squirrels, bears, and other mammals.
- It helps capture and retain snow, increasing the amount and duration of snowmelt in the summer.

The Strategy establishes management objectives, sets priorities, and describes coordination efforts for the agencies that manage public lands in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, Red Rock Lakes and National Elk Refuges, and the Bridger-Teton, Caribou-Targhee, Custer, Beaverhead-Deerlodge, Gallatin, and Shoshone National Forests.

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The Strategy is the culmination of five years of work by professional ecologists, foresters, and wildlife biologists in the GYA. The Strategy was developed with strong collaboration among these agencies as well as others with an interest in whitebark pine.

Sites proposed for protection and restoration will be prioritized according to criteria outlined in the Strategy.

Recognizing the importance of whitebark in the GYA, the GYCC formed the Whitebark Pine Subcommittee in 2000. In 2006, as whitebark mortality increased, the committee worked to map the distribution and mortality of whitebark and develop a management strategy to maintain whitebark on the landscape in the GYA.

Kallin said, "The Strategy demonstrates the commitment of every land manager in the GYA to addressing the precarious condition of whitebark in this ecosystem. We recognize that actions taken on any jurisdiction affect the long-term status of this important species throughout the GYA."

The Strategy is on the Web at

<http://www.fedgycc.org/WhitebarkPineOverview.htm>.

Information about the GYCC and links to member agency websites are available at

<http://fedgycc.org/>.

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