United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

Rocky Mountain Research Station

Air, Water, and Aquatic Environments Program

Providing scientific knowledge and technology to sustain our nation's forests, rangelands, and grasslands

Science BRIEFING

February 24, 2014

VETERANS SERVICE AT FRASER EXPERIMENTAL FOREST

BACKGROUND

The Fraser Experimental Forest (FEF) was established in 1937 in the heart of the central Rocky Mountains as part of a national network of experimental forests. The network was designed to dedicate land and facilities with a primary purpose of research involving various aspects of forests. The intent for FEF was to study the relationship between forest management and water yield in the subalpine zone. The Rocky Mountain Research Station maintains this 36 square-mile outdoor research laboratory, which is located about 50 air miles from Denver. FEF is an ideal location to study water, forests, and other physical and biological processes, and their integration in high-elevation subalpine watersheds. Today, the primary research addresses questions that deal with water quantity and water quality, and their relationship to forest vegetation and management across a range of scales from the small plot, to the hillslope, and basin. Other research projects include silviculture, riparian habitats, sediment, invasives, insects, soils, climate, birds, and a number of other pertinent topics.

Pine bark beetle outbreak in the Fool Creek watershed at the Fraser Experimental Forest.

RESEARCH

Research Activity: A work crew of veterans from the Southwest Conservation Corps, located in Durango, CO spent two days at the Fraser Experimental Forest helping with a critical backlog of hard work that site manager Banning Starr and hydrologist Kelly Elder are trying to complete. The crew of six removed a year's worth of sediment from both the East St Louis and Fool Creek weir ponds, and replaced buried posts on the perimeter fence around the FEF Headquarters compound. Elder said, "This crew was fantastic. They worked hard and smart, and were a pleasure to get to know. If we get back in a situation where we can hire help, these are the guys we want." The cooperative work was the result of an agreement between RMRS and the SCC.

Veteran work crew removing sediment from a weir pond in Fraser Experimental Forest .

Benefits to Resource Managers: Watershed research at Fraser Experimental Forest has provided long-term data on water yield and water quality from alpine forests in the Rocky Mountains. The headwater streams at Fraser are an important source of drinking water for communities on the Front Range.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please contact **Kelly Elder**, Research Hydrologist, kelder@fs.fed.us or 970-498-1233.

Keywords: *Fraser Experimental Forest, subalpine forest ecology, hydrology, long-term ecological monitoring*