

Monarch Pass Forest & Watershed Health Project

Annual Update



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2020 Highlights

- Completed 153 acres of steep slope harvest
- Completed 30 acres of hazard tree removal in Monarch Park Campground
- Delivered 101 log loads totaling nearly 2,500 tons of timber to the mill
- ARWC & USFS Planted 1,200 trees to finish the Trout Unlimited reclamation of an old gravel pit



Steep Slope Timber Removal



The Monarch Pass Forest & Watershed Health Project, a collaborative stewardship effort between the US Forest Service and the Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative, began implementation in early August of 2020. This innovative project to address fuel hazards from extensive beetle kill aims to prevent large scale, high severity fire in the headwaters of the South Arkansas River, and reduce the potential for detrimental post-fire impacts such as flooding, erosion, debris flows that impact water quality for downstream users. As well as protecting water and watershed values, this work also helps protect nearby assets and infrastructure, such as Monarch Mountain Ski Area, Monarch Park Campground, electric transmission lines, and the US-50 corridor.

We are excited to demonstrate the capability of this specialized equipment to address resource concerns on steep slopes in Colorado, which were traditionally treated using expensive helicopter logging methods, or most often left untreated. This project utilizes tethered, cut-to-length equipment that is able to operate on the 60% slopes along Monarch Ridge with minimal impact to the soils due to the cable tether and sophisticated engineering of this equipment. The machines move along corridors running with up and down the mountain along the fall line. There are two pieces of equipment, one that cuts, delimits and processes the tree into logs, and another that collects the logs and brings them to a central point to be loaded on log trucks and sent to be milled into studs for houses or pallet boards, or used for locally for firewood. In this way the Monarch Pass project generates a range of outcomes from ensuring a clean water supply to supporting Colorado's economy.



Additional Acres for 2021



We are excited to announce the addition 125 more acres to the Monarch Pass Project! These acres, along with the original 341 acres, bring the total project to 466 treatment acres. The new units were part of a conventional timber sale on low angle terrain that didn't sell due to logistical challenges involved. These units are adjacent to our steep slope work, and the Forest Service and ARWC recognized the need to treat these units to comprehensively address the fuels concerns in South Arkansas River headwaters. The additional work comes from partial funding from the USFS and the Chaffee County "Common Ground" fund. This addition, along with on-going treatments from Monarch Mountain Ski Area, will complete nearly all possible treatments over a 1,600-acre footprint on Monarch Pass. Large scale treatments such as this will change the nature of a potential fire on Monarch Pass, improve fire fighter safety, and reduce impacts to our water resources, local values and assets.



Completed treatments along Monarch Ridge. Note the riparian exclusion zones, which still contain dead trees. These areas give a good visual for what the entire area looked like before treatment.

Monarch Pass Funding Contributors

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