

FOREST HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

What every Colorado property owner should know.

A forest health assessment is a structured look at trees, stand conditions, wildfire exposure, site constraints, and landowner goals. It turns scattered observations into priorities, maps, and practical next steps.



A useful assessment connects individual tree symptoms with stand structure, site conditions, and the property's most important values.

● SEE THE WHOLE STAND

STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

Forest health is larger than any one tree.

- ✓ Record species, sizes, age classes, density, canopy layers, openings, and regeneration.
- ✓ Note competition, ladder fuels, dead wood, invasive plants, and habitat features.
- ✓ Compare sunny, shaded, wet, dry, sheltered, and exposed portions of the property.

● INSPECT TREE CONDITION

VIGOR, INSECTS, AND DISEASE

Look for patterns before naming a cause.

- ✓ Check crowns, needles, bark, stems, roots, wounds, pitch, boring dust, and fruiting bodies.
- ✓ Distinguish isolated damage from symptoms repeated across a species or site.
- ✓ Use timing, location, host species, and recent weather or disturbance to narrow possibilities.

● CONNECT RISK TO GOALS

PRIORITIZE ACTION

Not every problem requires the same urgency.

- ✓ Address hazards, home ignition, access, active outbreaks, and severe decline first.
- ✓ Identify monitoring items and thresholds that would trigger action.
- ✓ Sequence thinning, tree care, slash work, planting, and follow-up within a realistic plan.

✓ START HERE

- ✓ Gather property maps, treatment history, photos, and recent observations.
- ✓ Write down goals for safety, wildfire, tree health, habitat, privacy, and aesthetics.
- ✓ Walk the property systematically and photograph representative conditions.
- ✓ Request a site visit when diagnosis, risk, or treatment choice is uncertain.

▲ THE RAVEN WORKS PERSPECTIVE

A good assessment does not simply produce a list of problems. It explains how the forest is functioning, which values are exposed, what deserves attention first, and how today's work supports the desired future stand.

Observe broadly. Diagnose carefully. Prioritize clearly.

Sources: Colorado State Forest Service forest health, homesite assessment, and stewardship guidance.

◎ IN THE FIELD

Three habits improve every assessment:

LOOK FOR PATTERNS

Species, slope position, moisture, and the distribution of symptoms often reveal the cause.

COMPARE OVER TIME

Repeat photographs and simple notes can separate chronic trends from a single bad season.

SET NEXT ACTIONS

Each finding should lead to treatment, monitoring, expert review, or no action.