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*The Effect of the Mountain Pine Beetles on Understory Vegetation Growth Phase III*

The montane forest is an ecosystem located between 8,500 feet and 10,500 feet in Colorado. It is made up of a mixture of coniferous and Aspen trees. The understory is sparse and composed mainly of low growing clonal plants. The mountain pine beetle has become an epidemic in many parts of the Rockies. In the Roaring Fork watershed, it has decimated populations of Lodgepole Pines (*Pinus contortus*). This experiment examined the pine beetle's effect on understory vegetation. I conducted this study on a wooded ridge at 9,400 feet on the slope of Mount Sopris, in the White River National Forest in Pitkin County, Colorado. I ran a 210 meter transect through the forest, and recorded data on seven 20 meter side transects which I ran at a 90 degree angle to the main transect every 30 meters. On the side transects, I measure the understory using point intercept method, and the diameter at breast height (DBH) and health of all the trees within 10 meters of the transect. Since 2009, the percent of lodgepoles over 16 centimeters diameter at breast height (DBH) that are dead has doubled, and the amount of understory vegetation in the forest has increased by 8 percent. This study has shown that the understory is changing substantially due to the mountain pine beetle.