



# **MOUNTAIN PINE BEETLES AND COLORADO FORESTS**

**Vail Community Re-Survey Report**

## Introduction

This report describes changes in community reactions to the mountain pine beetle (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*) outbreak and resulting changes in north central Colorado forests. In 2006, a project was initiated to assess community responses to forest disturbance by mountain pine beetles. The full study included nine communities: Breckenridge, Frisco, Dillon, Granby, Kremmling, Silverthorne, Steamboat Springs, Vail, and Walden. This report focuses on responses from the community of Vail.

In 2007, 4,027 survey questionnaires were mailed to randomly selected households with addresses in the study communities. 1,346 completed surveys were returned (124 surveys received from Vail), yielding an aggregate response rate of 38.9%,

accounting for undeliverable surveys. Findings from the 2007 survey provided baseline information regarding community residents' risk perceptions, public relationships with land managers, environmental attitudes about forest management, and local action capacities in the context of forest disturbances caused by bark beetles.

A re-study mail survey was sent in 2018 to those original respondents from the 2007 survey and an additional sample of 3,000 households randomly selected from a database from USADATA. In 2018, 86 of the 1,130 completed surveys were received from Vail. Findings from the 2018 survey were compared to 2007 survey results to assess how attitudes and actions within Vail have changed over time.

## Perceptions of Beetle Impacts

Respondents were asked to indicate perceptions of forest mortality, natural regeneration, and beetle impacts. As in 2007, survey respondents rated the level of tree mortality they observed in and around Vail on a scale from 1 (no pines are dead) to 5 (all pines are dead). Similarly, respondents were asked to indicate the extent of regeneration they perceived in and around Vail on a scale from 1 (no natural re-

growth) to 5 (much natural re-growth). Perceptions of tree mortality and natural regeneration are depicted in Figures 1 and 2. In 2018, survey respondents in the Vail area indicated perceiving a slightly lower degree of tree mortality (mean response 2.9 compared to 3.1 in 2007), but also perceived more natural regeneration (mean response 2.6 compared to 2.2 in 2007).

Figure 1: Perceptions of Tree Mortality

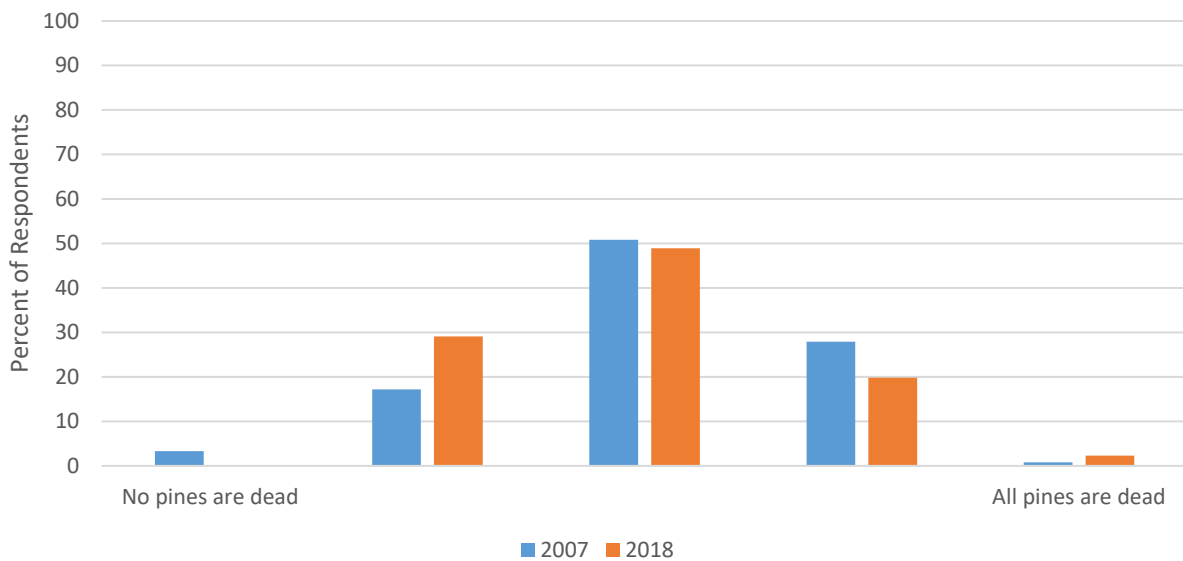
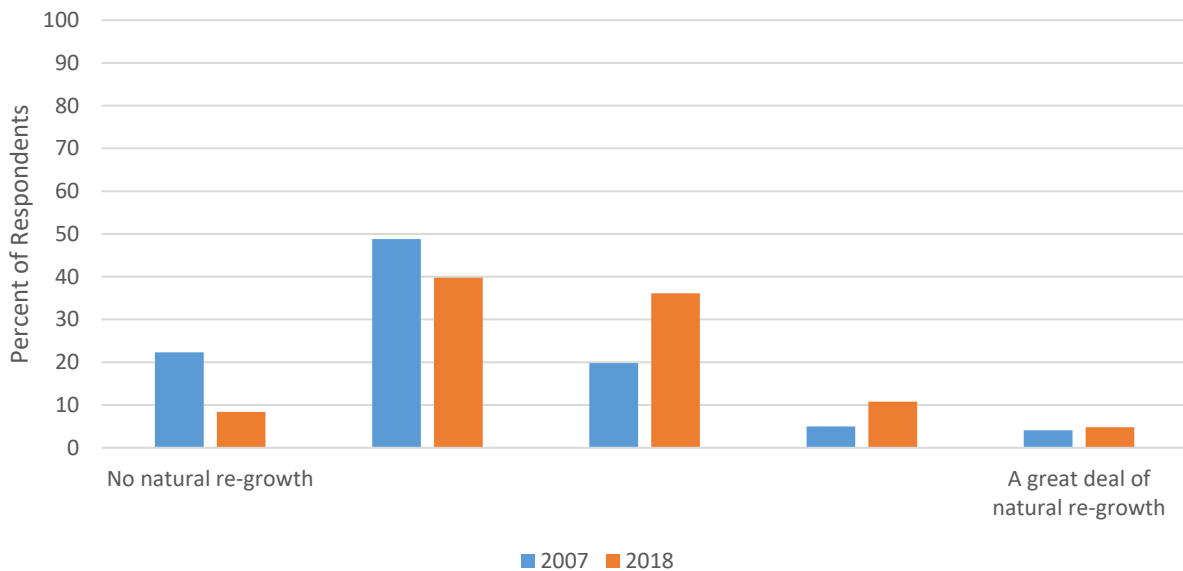


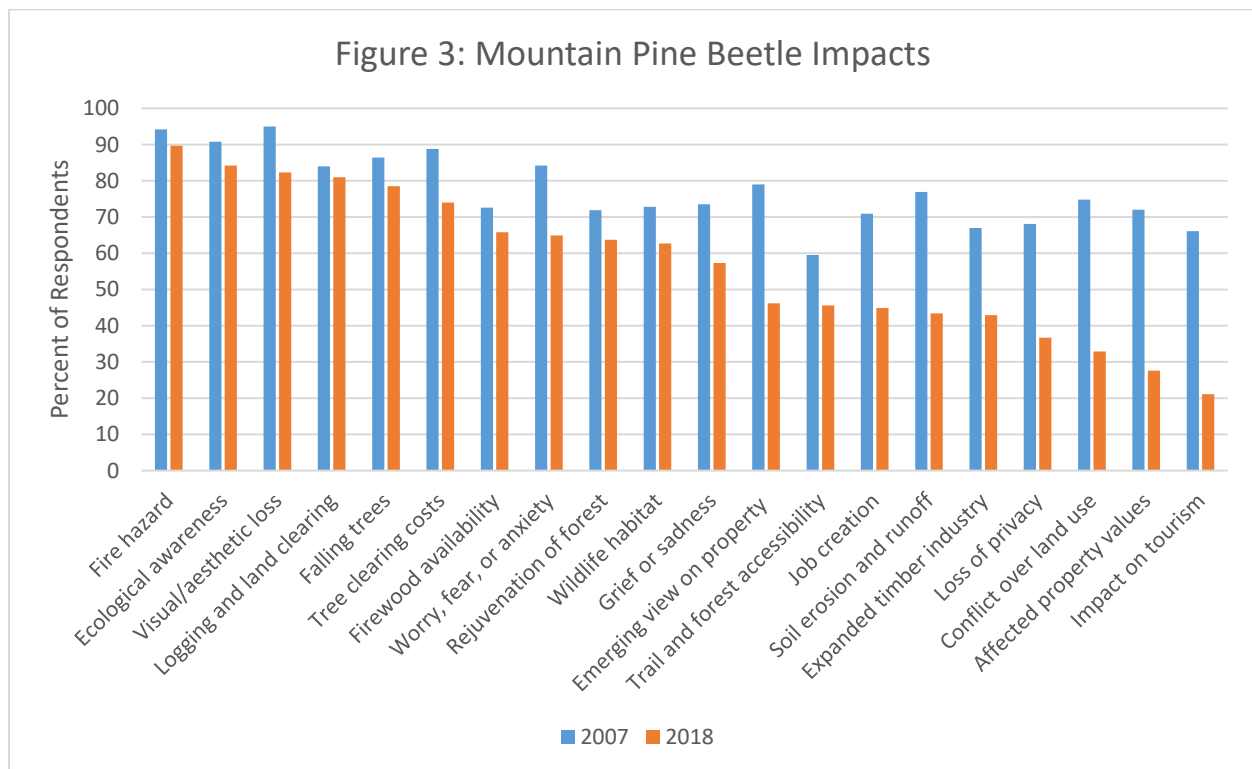
Figure 2: Perceptions of Natural Regeneration

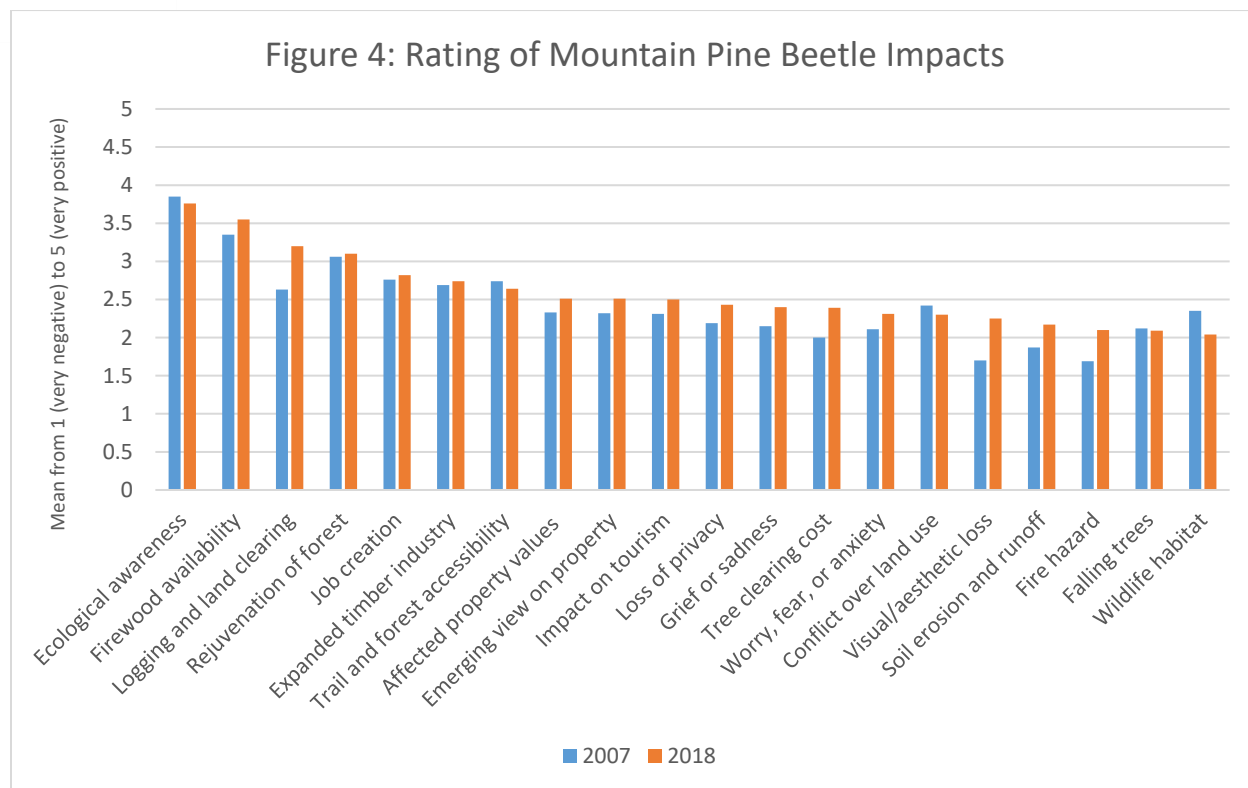


In both years, Vail respondents were asked to identify and rate the impacts from the mountain pine beetles on a graduated scale from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive). The bars in Figure 3 indicate the percent of respondents who indicated observing each mountain pine beetle impact in and around their community. Respondents indicated lower level of impact regarding most issues compared to 2007. The most frequently selected observations for 2018 respondents were “fires hazard”, increased ecological awareness”, and “visual/aesthetic loss”. The least frequently indicated impacts in 2018 were “impact on tourism”, “affected property values”, and “conflict over land use”.

The bars in Figure 4 indicate the mean values for each impact according to the

answers of respondents, arranged left to right from most positively perceived impacts to most negatively perceived impacts. Both “increased ecological awareness” and “availability of firewood” were indicated as positive impacts of mountain pine beetles (having a mean greater than 3.5). Survey respondents also had relatively more positive views in 2018 regarding many impacts such as “logging and land clearing”, “visual/aesthetic loss”, “impact on tourism”, “tree clearing cost”, “emotions such as grief or sadness”, “emotions such as worry, fear, or anxiety”, and “fire hazard”, as compared to the 2007 survey. Notably, respondents had less positive or more negative views regarding “wildlife habitat”, “trail and forest accessibility”, and “conflict over land use”.





## Forest Risk Perceptions

Forest risk perceptions were measured with a scale from 1 (not concerned) to 5 (extremely concerned). The bars in Figure 5 indicate the mean values for each concern according to the answers of respondents, arranged left to right from highest levels of concern to lowest levels of concern. While levels of concern remained generally

elevated, respondents expressed less concern about all surveyed issues compared to 2007. In 2018, the highest rated concerns were “forest fire”, “loss of scenic/aesthetic quality”, and “falling trees”. The lowest rated concerns for the area were “impact on livestock grazing”, “impact on property values”, and “loss of community identity”.

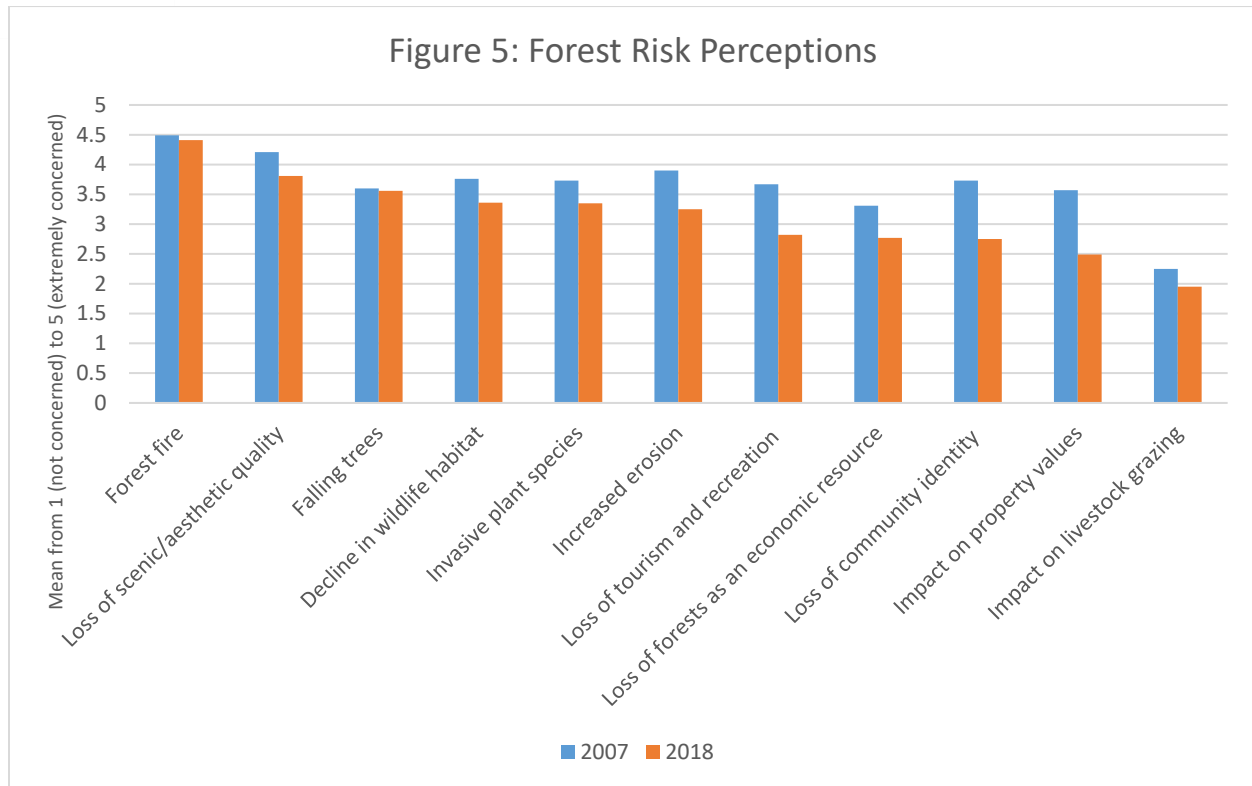
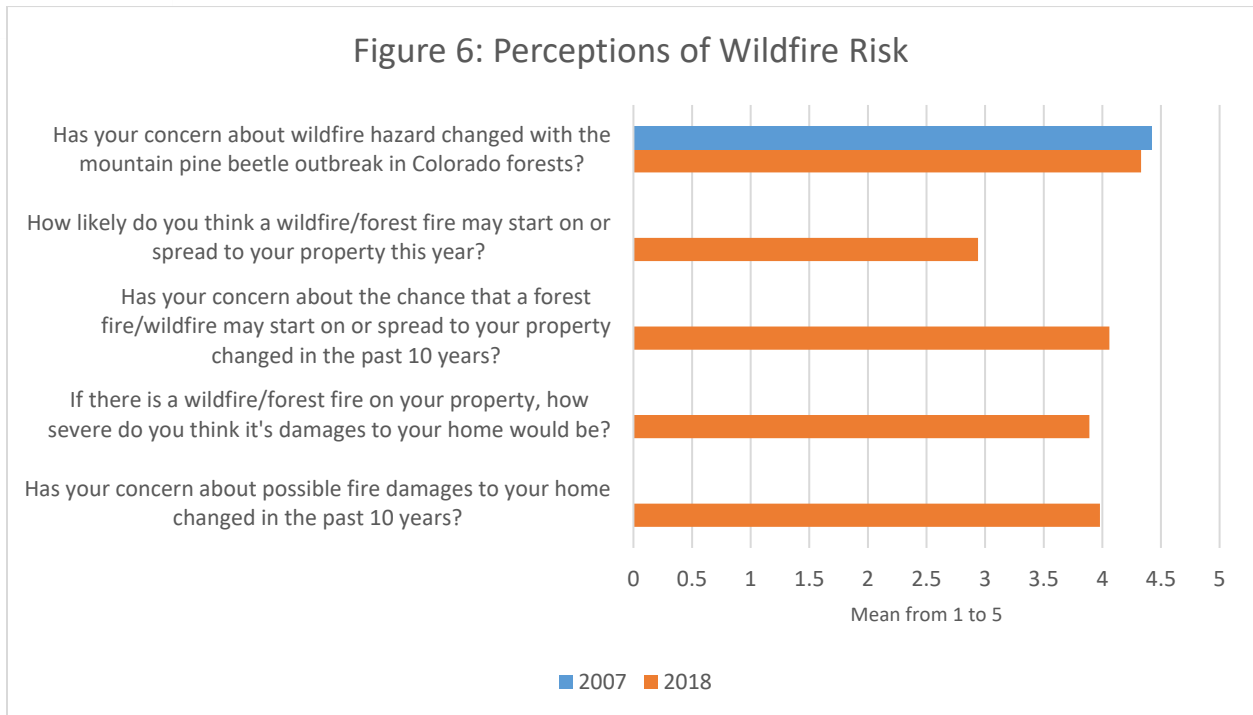


Figure 6 shows perceptions of wildfire risk. For the questions “has your concern about wildfire hazard changed with the mountain pine beetle outbreak in Colorado forests,” “has your concern about the chance that a wildfire/forest fire may start on or spread to your property changed during the past 10 years,” and “has your concern about possible fire damages to your home changed during the past 10 years,” perceptions were measured on a scale from 1 (strongly decreased) to 5 (strongly increased). For the question “how likely do you think a wildfire/forest fire may start on or spread to your property this year,” perceptions were measured on a scale from 1 (not likely) to 5 (very likely). For the question “if there is a wildfire/forest fire on your property, how severe do you think its

damages to your home would be,” perceptions were measured on a scale from 1 (not at all severe) to 5 (very severe).

The only question to appear in both survey years was “has your concern about wildfire hazard changed with the mountain pine beetle outbreak in Colorado forests?” Similar to 2007, 2018 respondents indicated an increased level of concern regarding wildfire risks with the mountain pine beetle outbreak (means of 4.4 and 4.3, respectively). In the 2018 survey, the respondents also indicated elevated levels of concern (mean larger than 3.5) over the past 10 years regarding the chance a forest fire/wildfire may start or spread to their property and the severity of possible fire damages to their home.

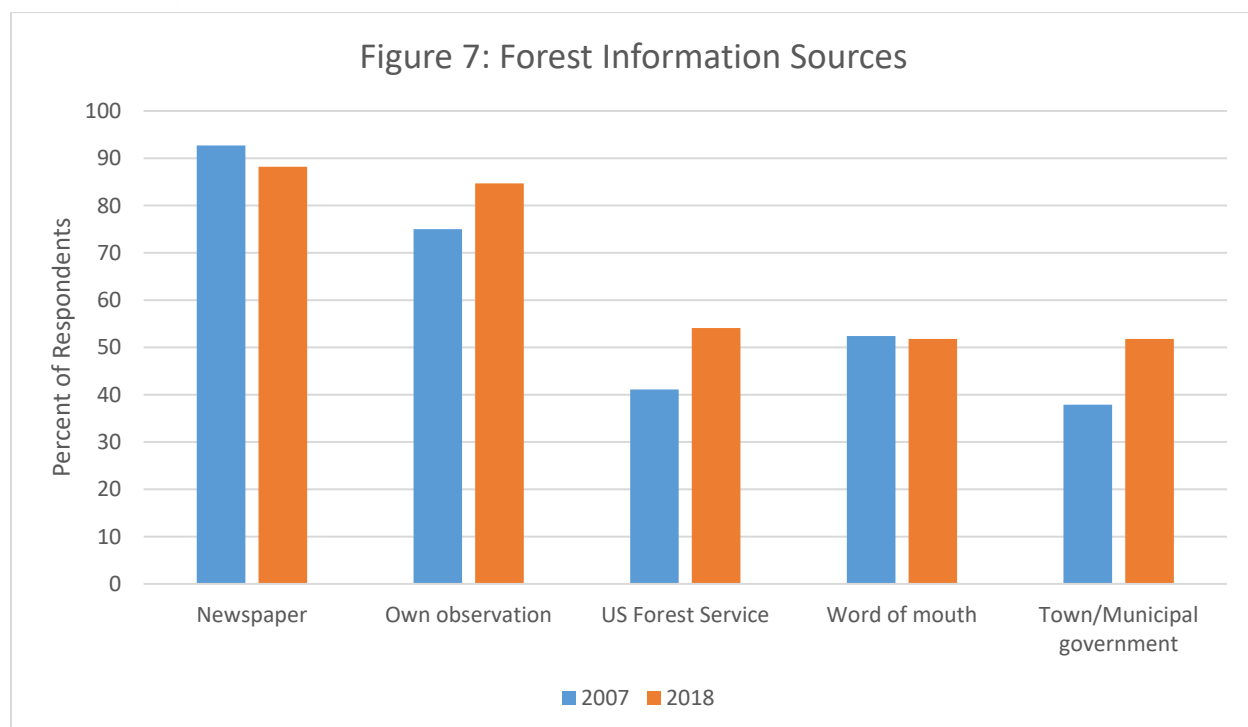
Figure 6: Perceptions of Wildfire Risk



## Sources of Forest Information

Respondents were asked to indicate which sources of information they relied on regarding forest issues. The percentages of respondents indicating reliance on the top five sources are displayed in Figure 7. The most popular sources of forest information for respondents in the area included “newspapers”, “own observations”, and

“US Forest Service”. In the 2018 survey, respondents in the Vail area reported increased reliance on “own observations”, “US Forest Service”, and “Town/municipal government” but decreased use of “newspapers” as sources of forest information compared to 2007.

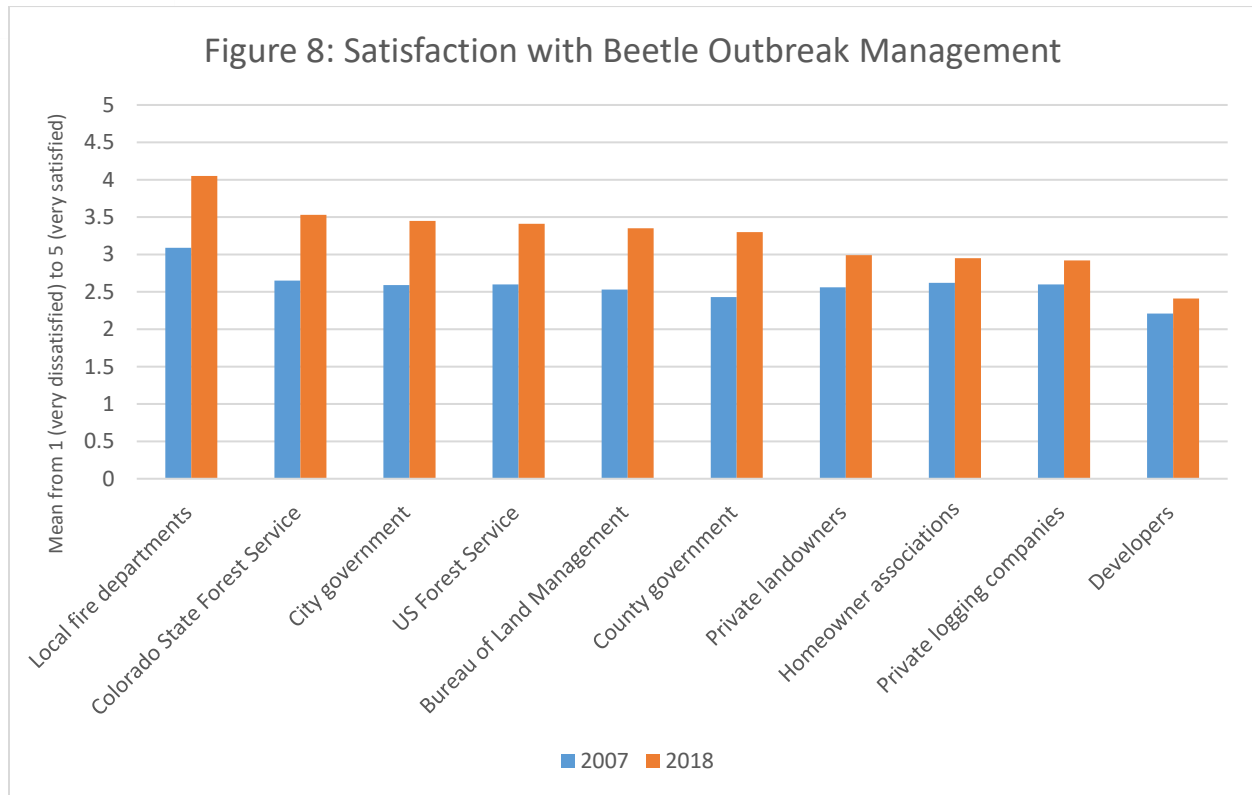


## Satisfaction with Management

In both 2007 and 2018, respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with entities involved with the management of the pine beetle issue on a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). The mean ratings for each entity are displayed in Figure 8. In 2018, respondents indicated satisfaction (mean at or above 3.5) with “local fire departments” and “Colorado State Forest Service”, and increased levels

of satisfaction with all land management entities as compared to the 2007 survey. Notably, Vail area respondents in 2018 indicated relatively higher levels of satisfaction with “local fire departments”, “city government”, “county government”, “Colorado State Forest Service”, “US Forest Service”, and “Bureau of Land Management”.

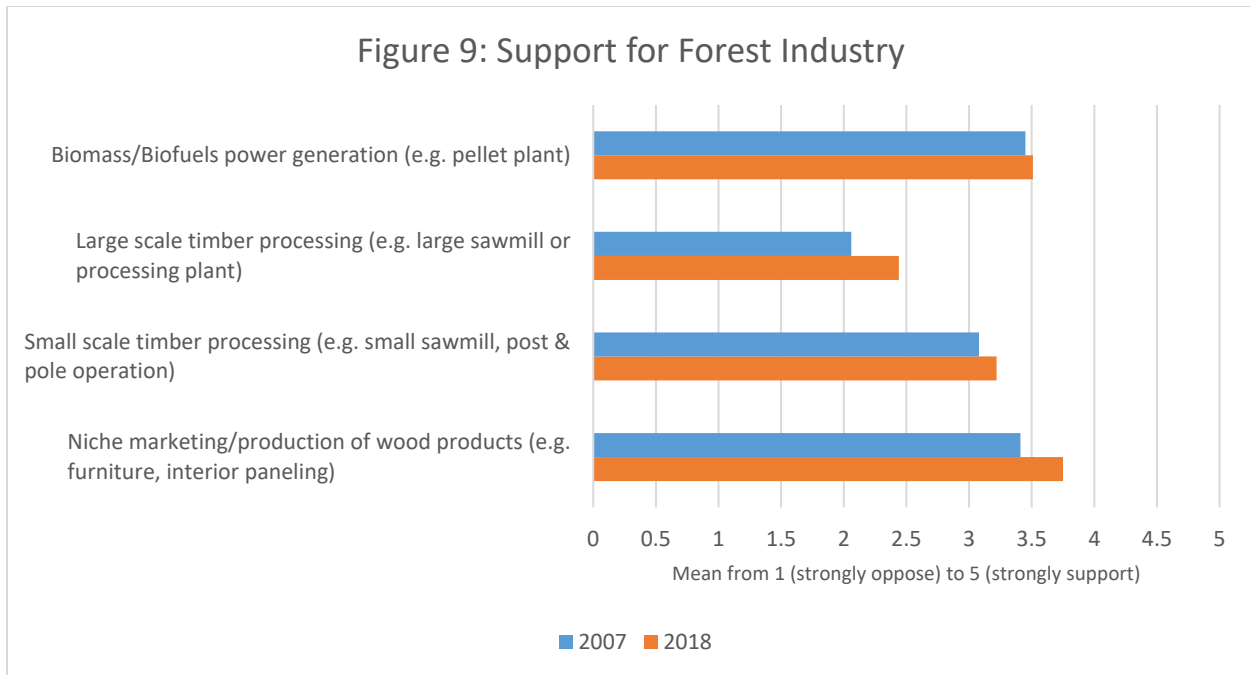




Respondents were also asked to indicate their level of support for several industry options in or near Vail, including “biomass/biofuels power generation (e.g., pellet plant),” “large scale timber processing (e.g. large sawmill or processing plant),” “small scale timber processing (e.g. small sawmill, post & pole operation),” and “niche marketing/production of wood products (e.g. furniture, wood paneling)”.

Respondents indicated their support on a scale from 1 (strongly oppose) to 5 (strongly support). Mean values for each option are displayed in Figure 9. Similar to 2007, the 2018 respondents were moderately supportive of all industry options (mean above 3.0), with the exception of “large scale timber processing”. In general, support for industry options increased from 2007 to 2018 surveys.

Figure 9: Support for Forest Industry

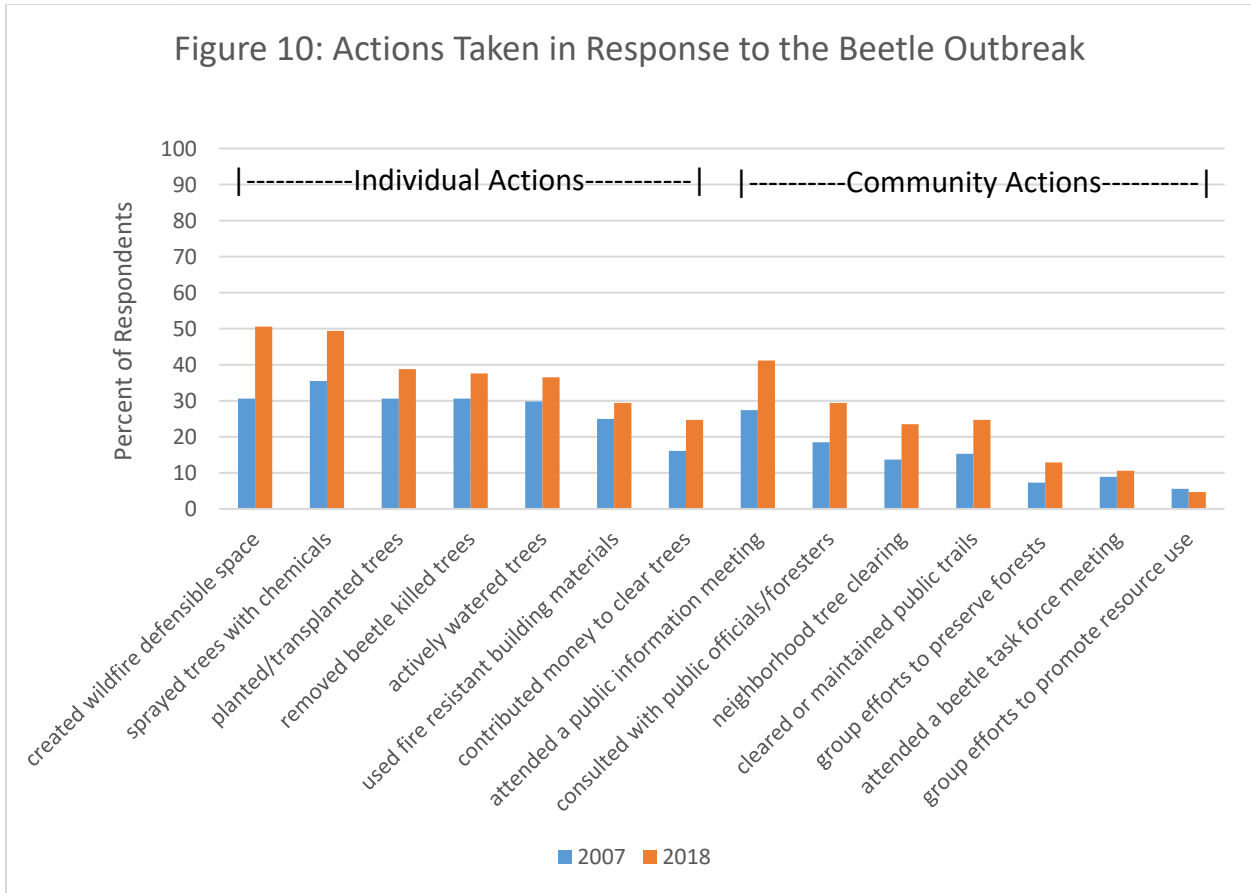


## Response to the Beetle Outbreak

Respondents were asked to indicate if they had participated in a series of actions in response to the mountain pine beetle. Figure 10 shows the percent of all respondents who undertook various activities, both as individuals and as part of community efforts. Overall, for both years, the proportion of respondents indicating participation in individual/household activities (on the left side) were higher than the proportion of those indicating participation in community related activities (on the right side). For individual actions, creating wildfire defensible space near structures, spraying trees with chemicals, insecticides or pheromones, and planting/transplanting trees were the most

actively reported activities for respondents in 2018. Creating wildfire defensible space replaced spraying trees with chemicals as the most frequent individual activity in the 2018 survey responses compared to 2007. The resurvey respondents reported increases in all individual actions, particularly the creation of wildfire defensible space and tree spraying or planting. Regarding community responses, respondents reported increased or sustained participation in all surveyed community actions with the exception of group efforts to promote resource utilization in 2018, as compared to the 2007 survey.

Figure 10: Actions Taken in Response to the Beetle Outbreak

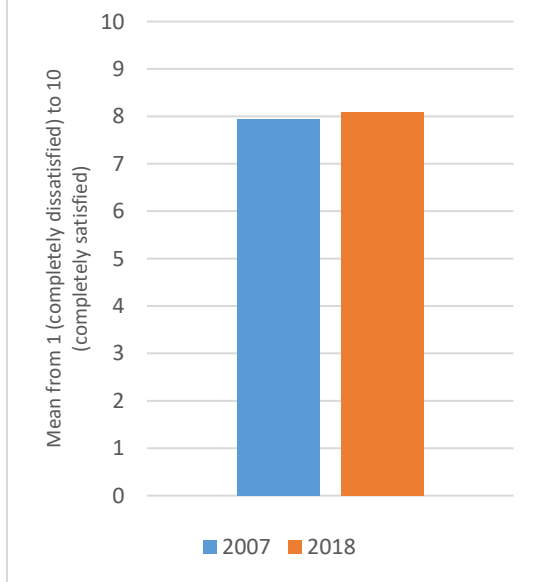


## Community Experience and Participation

Both surveys also contained questions related to respondents' community experience and participation in Vail. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with Vail as a place to live on a scale from 1 (completely

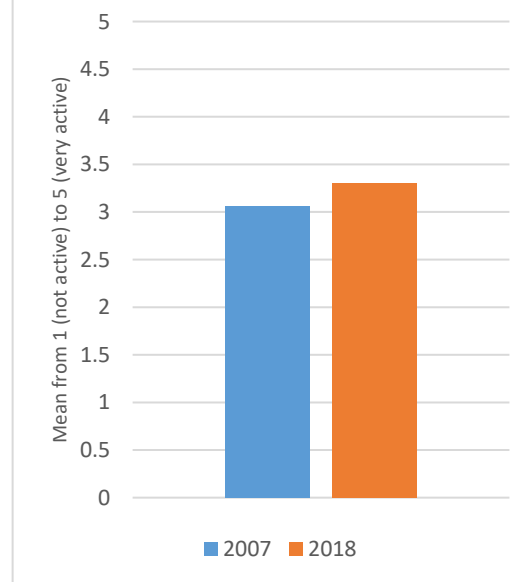
dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied). Mean responses for both years are indicated in Figure 11. In both 2007 and 2018, survey respondents indicated a high level of satisfaction with Vail as a place to live.

Figure 11: Satisfaction with Vail Community



In addition to their satisfaction with Vail as a place to live, respondents were asked to describe their personal level of involvement in Vail or local area activities or events on a scale from 1 (not active) to 5 (very active). Mean responses for community

Figure 12: Community Involvement in Vail



participation are indicated in Figure 12. In 2018, respondents indicated a slightly increased level of personal participation in Vail community or local area activities compared to 2007.

Respondents were asked to rate certain aspects of community life on a scale from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent). Mean responses are indicated in Figure 13. Generally, respondents indicated similar views of the various aspects of community life in 2018, as compared to the 2007 responses, with the exception of improved ratings for the

level and quality of communication among residents. In 2018, Vail respondents also indicated slightly less positive views of “place to visit or recreate” and “quality of life”. However, the mean ratings for these two community attributes reported by respondents remained positive (greater than 3.5).

