

# TIMBERLAND- WOODLOTS

## THINGS TO DO TO IMPROVE FOREST HEALTH

BY JOHN FERRIS

Local forester/tree farmer and Benewah Farm Bureau board member

- **Build species diversity** by selective harvest, thinning, or tree planting.
  - Resistant white pine, tamarack, and ponderosa pine are some of the trees that must be replanted to keep your mix as they do not naturally seed in well. Most insects and diseases such as the tussock moth, root rot, and mistletoe attack only one or two species, so a diverse forest halts their ability to spread.
- **Saw out forest roads** for firefighter-pumper truck access each summer.
- Apply for the County Firesafe Program (free) for homes and out buildings by calling 208-582-3243. Maintain a 100' buffer by spraying brush each year thereafter. Burn slash piles in the moist fall to lower fire hazard. Open burning usually starts on October 20th. Lop and scatter woods slash so it will rot, lower fire hazard, and improve soil.
- **Check or maintain road drainage**; culverts, ditches and waterbars before winter so roads won't wash out in the snow melt next spring. Seed disturbed soil to grass and clover in late fall.
- **Thin out crowded forests** if you have time and energy and slash down damaged trees after logging. Much of this can be done by proper logging but not all. This will increase growth and forest health. In ponderosa pine tree stands, it will beetle-proof your trees from bark beetle attack, as each tree needs enough root space to gather water.
- **Maintain a buffer strip** for shade and erosion control along creeks. If none exists, then replant the banks. Clean water and gravel are good for fish and the ecosystem. Cutthroat trout spawn in gravel in the upper reaches of smaller creeks. Protect and encourage beaver.
- **Prune lower branches** on young white pine to increase resistance to the blister rust virus.
- **Mark property corners** with steel posts, property lines with ribbon or blazes to prevent trespassers, and entrances with no trespassing signs or orange paint.
- **Maintain wildlife habitat** by spraying noxious weeds like yellow hawkweed, yellow-star thistle, or spotted knapweed, which force out wildlife feed. Protect our native plants and wildlife.

For in depth information, check with a consultant forester, the Idaho Dept. of Lands service forester 208-245-4551, county extension forester Chris Schnepf 208-446-1680, Coeur D'Alene tribal forestry or fishery 208-686-1800, and join **IdahoForestOwners.org**.

P.S. Forest health benefits trees, fish, wildlife, birds, endangered species, soil, air quality, water quality, aesthetics, recreation, lowers fire hazard, and greatly improves real estate property values. Pray for that part of God's creation under your stewardship.