

# *Spearfish Canyon Foundation*

<http://www.spearfishcanyon.com>

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## **Spearfish Canyon Foundation Donates \$200,000 to Beetle Fight**

SPEARFISH, S.D. (3/26/2012) – At a special meeting last week, Spearfish Canyon Foundation board members presented Lawrence County officials with a \$200,000 check to aid in the fight against mountain pine beetles. This most recent donation from the Spearfish Canyon Foundation brings its total contribution to the Lawrence County pine beetle project to more than \$330,000. This donation will allow county officials, in cooperation with the US Forest Service, to complete phase one of the five-year mountain pine beetle reduction plan that has been implemented in Lawrence County.

“This cutting of green-hit trees is making a real difference. It is curbing exponential spread between tree stands that are currently infested by beetles and neighboring healthy trees that still have a fighting chance,” said Susan Johnson, president of the Spearfish Canyon Foundation. “We applaud the work being done in Lawrence County and are proud to support the effort with this recent donation.”



The \$200,000 donation from the Foundation came at a critical time for the Lawrence County pine beetle project. The project has been paying county-hired seasonal employees to cut and chunk green, beetle-infested trees on Forest Service-managed land since the first of the year. Infested trees are cut into two-foot sections and left to dry, killing the embedded beetles before their summer flight to healthy trees. The Forest Service gave approval for the project. Lawrence County is managing the overall project, doing the felling and recon. The project is being funded evenly between Lawrence County funds and independent donations like this one.

At the project’s peak this winter, Lawrence County had 53 qualified sawyers running chainsaws seven days a week on Spearfish Mountain and in the Spearfish Canyon area. At that time, they were taking down almost 3,000 beetle-infested trees per day. In recent weeks, county funds and private donations were nearly depleted and Lawrence County had to scale back its cutting crews by almost half.

“With the county recently able to allocate \$300,000 from the mine severance tax fund, and the Foundation’s additional \$200,000, things are ramping back up for the rest of the month,” said Dave Heck, of Lawrence County Invasive Species Management. “Since January 1, more than 40,000 beetle-infested trees have been cut through this project. An additional 40,000 infested trees have been cut through a similar, but separately funded, project that has been running concurrently. For every infested tree that comes down, three to five healthy trees around it are saved from the beetle flight.”

The current phase of the Lawrence County beetle project is scheduled to end by April 1. The second phase will begin this fall and will again be funded by a combination of public and private dollars. The Spearfish Canyon Foundation has launched an aggressive fundraising campaign to help generate support for the project’s future phases. Interested parties can learn more about the Lawrence County project or make a donation online at [www.bhpinebeetle.com](http://www.bhpinebeetle.com).

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