

Homer  
Volunteer  
Fire  
Department

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# Memo 10-111

**To: Walt Wrede, City Manager** *W. Wrede*

**From: Robert L. Painter, Fire Chief** *R. Painter*

**CC:**

**Date: August 3, 2010**

**Re: Homer Reservoir Watershed**

Walt,

As Fire Chief I wholeheartedly endorse the plan as proposed by the Spruce Bark Beetle Mitigation Program. It is evident from the report and my thirty-two years of experience in emergency services that by reducing the fuel load, especially that of dead and dying trees and removing those trees that have already fallen will be a benefit when we have a fire in that area. This action will also speed forest regeneration by allowing seedlings an opportunity to establish themselves without competition from the native grasses that would normally take the place of the spruce forest when burned or eliminated by beetle. While it is not the primary responsibility of HVFD to respond to wildfires, we do often provide initial attack to area wildfires under a Cooperative Agreement and Annual Operating Plan with the Alaska Division of Forestry. Having responded to several wildfires in the area over the last 19 years in Homer I've seen how difficult it is to access some areas, especially those with a significant number of fallen trees on the ground, making ground attack of the fire almost impossible and much more hazardous to the firefighters.

With the selective harvesting of dead and dying trees (those on the ground or headed there) and the reforestation outlined in the plan these areas will more quickly return to a more natural state, reduce the likelihood of conflagration and help protect the Homer watershed.

Robert L. Painter, Fire Chief