

# Show Low Monthly News



October 2002

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## “Why are the trees dying?”

Since the Rodeo-Chediski Fire, we’ve been hearing this question asked over and over again. The answer is simple: *“Too many trees and too little moisture.”*

The dead and dying trees you see around the White Mountains are either the result of drought or bark beetle infestation—currently, the two major factors killing Ponderosa pines. As you drive around the area, you’ll notice that junipers and other trees are dying as well. The tinder-dry forest conditions we’re experiencing can be seen throughout much of the Southwest.

Over the past century, the area has had generally adequate moisture and natural fire occurrences were suppressed. The

downside, however, was that these conditions allowed the forests to grow far denser than normal. Until the mid-1990s, there was enough moisture and trees thrived in these unnaturally dense forests. They even invaded meadows and grasslands, areas in which they had not existed before.

Since 1996, precipitation (including rain and snow) locally has been far below normal. The dense stands of trees compete for very limited moisture. Consequently, the strongest thrive but the others die. Sadly, it is often the older, higher-value yellow pines that don’t survive.

Imagine desperately wanting a drink of water and finding only a faulty faucet to quench your thirst. This is exactly what

our entire forest has faced over the last six years. A 50-foot tall Ponderosa pine needs up to 75,000 gallons of water throughout its root zone in a 16-inch rainfall area every year to thrive. Unfortunately, in most areas below 6,800 feet, there hasn’t been enough moisture to come close to meeting minimum needs.

These drought conditions have left the trees stressed and unhealthy. They become susceptible to disease and decay. In the case of Ponderosa pines, the greatest enemy is the pine bark beetle. Bark beetles have always existed in the forest, but a healthy tree can fight off infestation. Unhealthy trees cannot.

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## Paying a solemn tribute



Against a backdrop of thunder and lightning, a crowd of about 600 solemnly paid tribute to those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001. They braved the heavy rains on September 11, 2002 for a pre-dawn memorial service honoring the victims of last year’s terrorist attacks.

Guest speakers featured Mayor Gene Kelley, Acting Commander Ray Ballesteros of the Show Low Police Department and Chief Ben Owens of the Show Low Fire Department. In a moving speech,

Chief Owens recounted his experiences during the recovery effort at the World Trade Center. He had been invited to New York two days after the twin towers collapsed.

The Show Low High School Choir and Band performed “God Bless America” and the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” while a video tribute produced by City 4 Television was projected on a suspended screen. We were reminded of the freedoms we Americans enjoy, and the responsibilities that come with them.

Thanks to the support of the Show Low Unified School District and City staff, the memorial service was a fitting remembrance. As stated in the program, “Together, we vow to never forget what happened. Together, we pledge to continue to diligently protect the freedoms that were violated that day.”

## Input wanted for housing plan

The Governor’s Office of Housing Development has awarded a grant to the City of Show Low, the Show Low Housing Coalition and White Mountain Catholic Charities to prepare a Community Housing Plan for Show Low. Research will be done into the region’s housing availability, types and affordability; in addition, recommendations will be developed to encourage housing safety and affordability.

The steering committee has selected Grantmasters to conduct public meetings, prepare the recommendations and the Community Housing Plan, and present the final plan to the City Council in mid-2003. The first public meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, **October 16, 2002 from 7 to 9 p.m.** in the Show Low Council Chambers, 200 West Cooley. Public involvement is critical to preparing a housing plan that is of most benefit to the community.

Any citizen interested in joining the steering committee is invited to call Paul Hanlan, Senior Planner, at 532-4042.

# Calendar of Events

Family Aquatic Center: 532-4130

Recreation: 532-4140 • Public Library: 532-4070

- 09/30** 7 a.m., City Hall Conference Room  
**City Council Study Session**
- 10/01** 7 p.m., Council Chambers  
**City Council Meeting**
- 10/02** 1:30 p.m., Public Library (book: "Short Story Masterpieces")  
**Arizona Humanities Book Discussion**
- 10/05** 3:30–5 p.m., Aquatic Center  
**Ring Toss & Duck Races** (all ages)
- 10/08** 7 p.m., Council Chambers  
**Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting**
- 10/10** 3:30–4 p.m., Public Library  
**Puppet Show** (all ages)
- 10/14** 7 a.m., City Hall Conference Room  
**City Council Study Session**
- 10/15** Council Chambers  
5:30 p.m., **City Council Special Policy Meeting**  
7 p.m., **City Council Meeting**
- 10/16** 2:45 p.m., Recreation conference room  
**Halloween** craft class (grades 2-6)
- 10/18** 3:45–4:15 p.m. & 7:45–8:15 p.m.  
Aquatic Center – **Balloon Squat Relay**
- 10/22** 7 p.m., Council Chambers  
**Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting**
- 10/25** 4–4:30 p.m., Public Library (registration required)  
**Pumpkin Decorating** craft (all ages)
- 10/25** **Pumpkin Carving Contest** (all ages)  
Drop off carved pumpkins at the Show Low Public Library from 10/25 to 10/29 by 3 p.m. (judging held at 5 p.m., 10/29)
- 10/25** 6–9 p.m., Aquatic Center  
**Halloween Bash** (all ages)
- 10/26** 9 a.m., Centennial Park  
**Halloween Candy Scramble** (ages 10 & under)
- 10/26** 2 p.m., Aquatic Center  
**Underwater Pumpkin Hunt** (ages 11-17)
- 10/29** 5–6 p.m., Public Library  
**Halloween Party** (all ages)
- 10/31** 5–8 p.m., Festival Marketplace  
**Trunk or Treat** (for all ages) is a safe, fun way for kids and parents to enjoy Halloween. Last year's event drew over 2,000 kids. Local merchants and organization representatives will hand out treats from the trunks of their vehicles along Cooley from 9th to 11th streets. Come enjoy game booths, goodies, Z-92 live remote, costume contests and loads of fun! For more information or to help with this event, contact Show Low Main Street at 537-8181.



**"Why are the trees dying?"**...continued from cover page

There is no way to predict how long this type of weather pattern will continue. Nor is there any way to predict how bad it will get before conditions improve. The drought in the 1950s lasted less than a decade. The drought in the 1400s lasted for 200 years, with a few brief interruptions. Some experts say we're in the dry cycle of a 50-year drought.

We can blame bugs, disease, drought and/or forest management practices for the current situation. But the Rodeo-Chediski Fire was a frightening and devastating introduction to forest reality. It proved what experts have been saying for a long time—the forest is too crowded and too dry, with combustible fuel everywhere. There is, and has been for too many years, too much competition for limited moisture, nutrients and space. In this crowded environment, death and disease are inevitable.

The more important question now is, *"What can we do about the dead and dying trees?"* Some trees are too far gone to be saved. Others can be helped with deep watering, once every three months. Four inches of water on the ground hydrates 28 to 36 inches of soil. Ponderosa pines have a shallow root zone, reaching down 30 to 40 inches, but it is far-reaching. The root zone extends around the tree as far as the tree is tall. In other words, a 50-foot pine tree's roots extends 50 feet out.

There are about 8,000 acres of private land in Show Low. Obviously, the only effective, long-term answer is for every landowner to take responsibility for his property. It means keeping individual yards healthy.

The pines have been dropping needles all year, a true indication of drought. Needles can be raked (a pitchfork works better) but leave the mat (underlayer) that has turned black. This mat creates an interface to prevent evaporation and keeps the soil temperature cooler. Trees should be trimmed 10 to 15 feet above the ground, especially those near structures.

Dealing with trees infested with the bark beetle is more complex. Larger, thickly barked trees are especially attractive to the beetles. If a tree is infected, it is too late to save it and you must remove it. The wood must be hauled away and disposed of properly or covered with clear (not dark) plastic to trap the heat. The plastic must be buried in a trench completely around the perimeter so no air gets in. If not completely enclosed, the beetle larvae can still develop under the bark. The beetle lays the eggs but it's actually the larvae that feed in the tree.

To save healthy trees, the first—and most effective—step is to thin out excess trees to manageable numbers (30 to 50 trees per acre). It's the competition for resources that has stressed the trees. Start with areas nearest to any infested trees. Do not change the grade around the pines or cut trenches through the root zone. Limit cinders to areas away from the pine root zones.

Chemical treatments for uninfested trees are available but they may also kill or deter the natural predators in the environment, making the beetle problem potentially more acute. Use caution if you decide to chemically treat your trees.

If you have any questions or want more information, contact Jan Mathis, Community Forester, at 532-6139 or Steve Campbell, Navajo County Cooperative Extension Director, in Holbrook at (928) 524-6271.

(Editor's note: A big thank you goes to Steve Campbell for his expertise and providing the information for this article.)

Check out City 4 Television and the City's Web site at [www.ci.show-low.az.us](http://www.ci.show-low.az.us) for more information