



Parks & Open Space

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PARKS & OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Time/Date of Meeting: 6:30 p.m., Thursday, July 24, 2025

Location: Boulder County Courthouse

1325 Pearl Street, Third Floor, Boulder

TO:	Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee
FROM/PRESENTER:	Shane Milne, Forest Planning Supervisor
AGENDA ITEM:	Limber pine and bristlecone pine conservation in Boulder County
ACTION REQUESTED:	Information Only

Limber pine is a long lived, five-needle white pine widely distributed in western North America. In Colorado, limber pine occupies sites from 5200' at Pawnee Buttes to 11,000'+ near Rollins Pass. Because of its ability to survive in the subalpine zone, limber pine is often referred to as a high elevation white pine. Trees growing in these extreme, high elevation environments are often the longest surviving individuals with tons of character--some can live beyond 1,000 years. In Boulder County, we have two species of white pine—limber pine and Rocky Mountain bristlecone pine, with limber pine being far more common.

Limber pine is not considered a commercially valuable species, but does provide several ecosystem services including soil stabilization, snow retention, colonization following fire, food and habitat for wildlife, and as a foundation species that provides suitable conditions for the establishment of other tree species. Unfortunately, across its range limber pine is facing multiple threats including mountain pine beetle, white pine blister rust, and dwarf mistletoe. All these agents can cause widespread tree mortality and, when found in combination, can be even more lethal such that the long-term sustainability of the species is threatened.

Despite widespread mortality at some local levels, limber pine still maintains its overall range but is listed as a species of special concern by Boulder County. Because of this status, limber pine was the subject of a species conservation plan that outlines what management efforts Parks & Open Space should take to ensure the persistence of this species.

Since 2020, conservation actions taken by BCPOS forestry staff include the installation of 30 long-term monitoring plots, annual insect and disease surveys, cone collections, direct seeding, and seedling planting projects.

This presentation will provide additional details on white pines in Boulder County along with an update on our most current findings and future efforts.