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**(WASHINGTON, D.C.)** – This week Rep. Mike Coffman (R-Aurora) met with U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service officials and toured portions of the Pike National Forest. Coffman’s meeting and visit focused on a variety of forest and watershed issues including fuel reduction, ponderosa pine ecosystems, forest restoration, bark beetle ecology and impacts, forest health impacts on watersheds, and catastrophic fire impacts. U.S. Forest Service Deputy Regional Forester Tony Dixon, Pike-San Isabel Forest Supervisor Bob Leaverton, and South Platte District Ranger Randy Hickenbottom met with Coffman and led the site visit.

“Much of the forested land in Colorado is in very poor condition. Beetle infestation, drought, and a buildup of hazardous fuels have left much of our forestland in a dangerous condition. Recent droughts act as a stark reminder of how important a reliable source of clean water is. Much of the West’s water supply originates in Colorado and much of that water supply is under threat from the current combination of problems,” Coffman commented.

During his visit Coffman honed in on and discussed the impacts forest health and forest management have on wildfires and the threat wildfires pose to water quality and water supply.

“Our forests’ current problems threaten Colorado’s ecosystems, our communities, and our water supply. Removal of dead trees and thinning of overgrown areas in our forest are a critical part of forest management and I am actively working with the rest of the Colorado congressional delegation to reach consensus on forest health legislation that would help address this growing problem,” Coffman continued.

Without active management the forests are also much more susceptible to wildfires. To address this particular problem Coffman cosponsored and voted for H.R. 1404 the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Act (FLAME Act) of 2009 in March. The bill would make available federal funds to cover the growing costs associated with fighting large scale wildfires. "Today's visit was informative and reaffirmed my belief that more needs to be done to actively and properly manage Colorado's forests. We must take action to protect our forests, our water supply, and our citizens," Coffman concluded.

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Please see this [picture](#) from the trip. From left to right: Forest Supervisor Bob Leaverton, US Congressman Mike Coffman, District Ranger Randy Hickenbottom, Colorado State Representative Cheri Gerou