



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Mount Rushmore
National Memorial

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Mount Rushmore National Memorial News Release

Project Citizen students research mountain pine beetle at Mount Rushmore National Memorial

(Keystone, SD) Spearfish Middle School sixth graders participated in a field study at Mount Rushmore National Memorial in January in order to gather scientific data and learn from agency experts about the pine beetle infestation that is killing trees and increasing the risk of fire in the memorial and surrounding areas. The students are participating in the curricular project We the People: Project Citizen sponsored by the Chiesman Center for Democracy in which students identify and research a public policy in their community, research the problem, evaluate alternative solutions, develop their own solution in the form of a public policy and create a political action plan. The students, along with their teacher, Mrs. Kathy Wolff, selected the pine beetle infestation as an issue critical to their local community and worthy of their research after reading about the interagency meeting held recently to address the problem. The students decided to focus their pine beetle research on the threat to the trees surrounding Mount Rushmore because the national memorial is not only an important feature of their Black Hills community but an attraction for millions of visitors from around the world. The students worked side-by-side with representatives of the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service and a representative of the Dakota Society of American Foresters to observe the effect of the beetle on ponderosa pine, gather data about tree habitat, record signs of beetle damage and discuss possible solutions. The students participated in a panel discussion about short term and long term solutions with National Park Service curator, Bruce Weisman, Black Hills National Forest District Ranger Lynn Kolund, and Dakota Society of American Forester representative Bill Colburn of Spearfish Forest Products. The students will continue their study of the collaborative efforts of government, industry and legislature as they complete their portfolio, "Raiders of the Lost Park," to present at a public hearing showcase before a panel of community members. Project Citizen helps participants develop support for democratic values and principles and feelings of political effectiveness as they develop life-long skills in civic participation.

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NPS photo by Rhonda Buell Schier

Students take in the view from Breezy Point of the effects of the mountain pine beetle on the Black Hills National Forest.



NPS photo by Rhonda Buell Schier

Mount Rushmore Interpretive Park Ranger Blaine Kortemeyer teaches Project Citizen students about the effects of the mountain pine beetle on the ponderosa pine forest.

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