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**(Regional)-Study Shows Drought Has Sped Pine Beetle Epidemic**



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 11/06/2012 10:18 AM

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) - University of Colorado researchers say the 2001-02 drought and others greatly accelerated the spread of a beetle epidemic that has killed thousands of square miles of trees in the West.

CU said Monday the study compared patterns of outbreaks in lodge pole and ponderosa pines. CU says the research shows the 2001-02 drought was key in turning the infestation into a regional epidemic, and the outbreak continued to spread even after precipitation increased.

Doctoral student Teresa Chapman, the study's lead author, says the beetles have affected nearly 3,000 square miles in southern Wyoming, Colorado and northern New Mexico.

Chapman says the research shows the outbreak started in many locations, coalesced and continued spreading.

The study was published in the journal Ecology. The National Science Foundation funded the research.