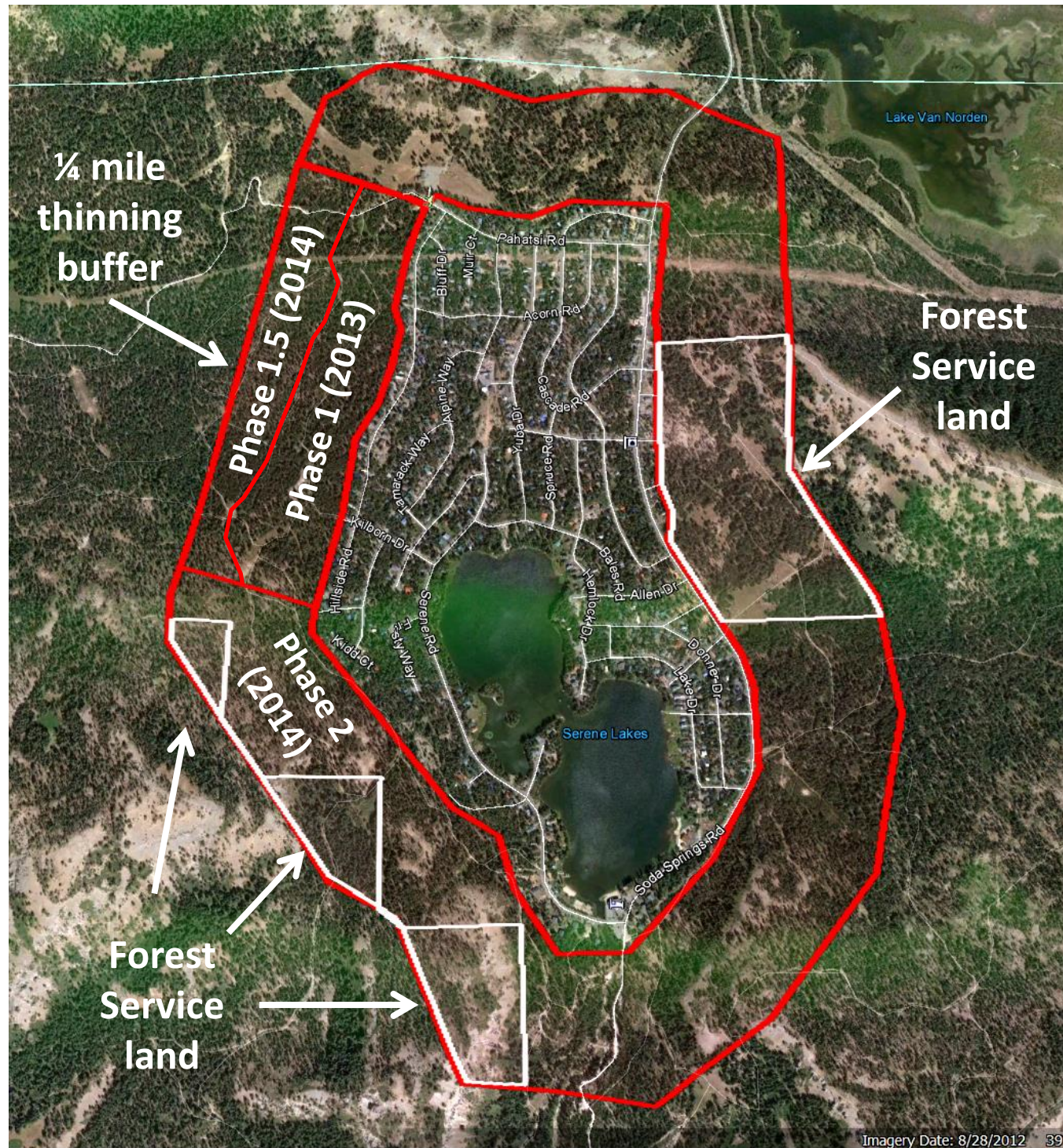


SELF-GUIDED FOREST WALK OF TDLT TREE CLEARING PROJECT

Take a walk along the Big Ben trail to see the results of the ongoing tree thinning project started in the Fall 2013.

Look for signs along the way that will indicate points of interest and explain what was done and why. The map gives an overview of the entire project that is ongoing. Please respect the areas that are closed due to forestry operations.

In addition, you can visit the area cleared by SLPOA and the Forest Service at the intersection of Soda Springs Rd. and Beacon (see blue star on map).

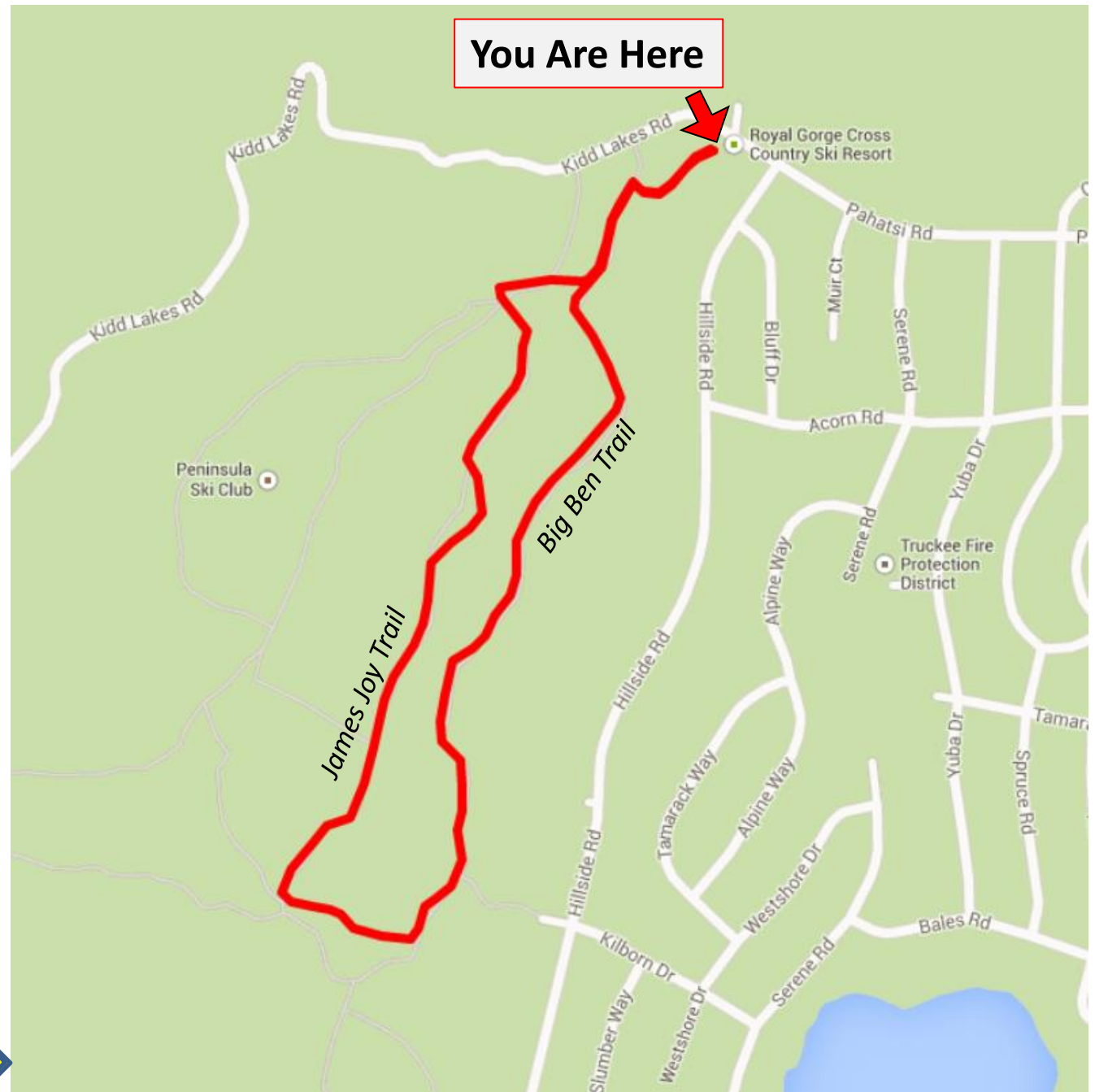


Map of Fire Walk Loop Trail

The 1.5 mile loop follows the Big Ben ski trail into the restored forest. Look for signs along the way that provide information about the forest restoration project.

The Fire Walk trail loops over to the James Joy ski trail and back to the trailhead.

We encourage you to hike on all the available trails in the Royal Gorge area.



EQUIPMENT USED IN FOREST THINNING (PHASE 1)

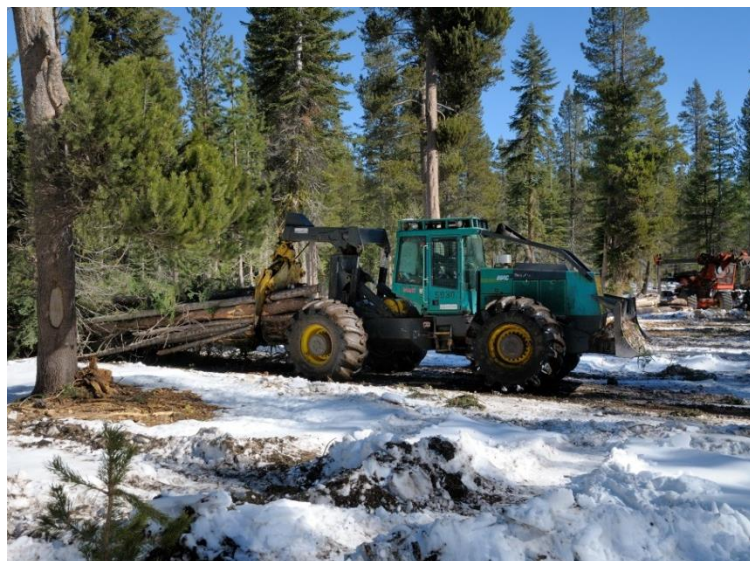


Feller-buncher cuts the trees



Delimber strips the logs

Skidder gathers the felled trees



Masticator reduces the brush

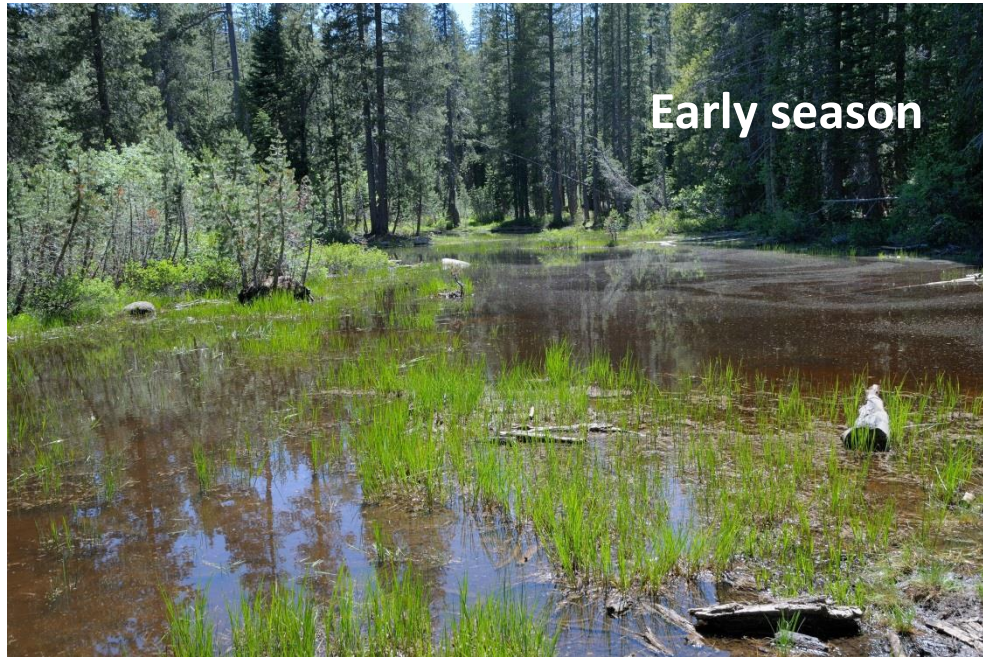


THE LANDING ZONE



The landing zone from last year is shown in the picture above. The delimber picks up the tree and feeds it into the cutter blades to remove the limbs. The tree trunk is then stacked or placed on a flatbed truck for removal. At this point, trees are sorted according to type. Western White Pine and Red Fir are used for lumber. Lodge Pole Pine, the predominant species, is only used for fire wood or wood chips. The chipper is seen on the left.

MARSHY AND WETLAND AREAS WERE PROTECTED



Marshy areas were marked with blue ribbons (see picture on right) to prevent heavy equipment from destroying sensitive ecosystems. Trees surrounding the pre-marked areas were cut by hand. The marshes promote the growth of willows and sedges. In the spring this marsh and wetland was alive with Pacific Chorus Frogs that could be heard throughout the forest. If you are lucky, you will see one of these beautiful green and orange frogs. Western toads also breed in marshes. They are brownish-green with a white stripe on their backs.



EQUIPMENT USED IN FOREST THINNING (PHASE 2)



Tree Harvester cuts & delimbs the trees



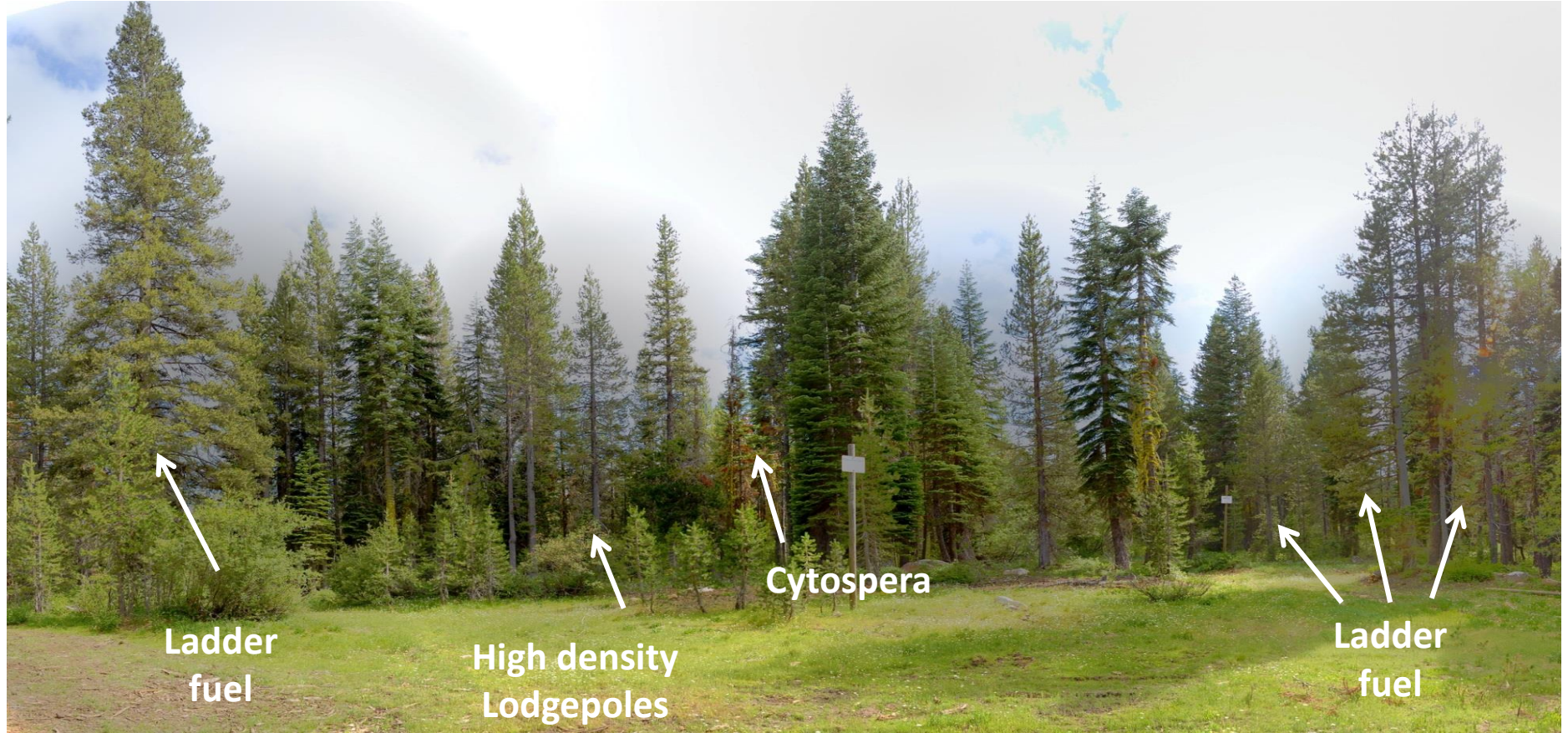
Forwarder moves and stacks logs

The equipment used for phase two has lower impact on the forest floor. The equipment uses large rubber tires that don't tear up the ground like tracked vehicles. The Forwarder moves the felled trees in a carrier and does not drag them like a skidder.



Mobile Chipper

SIGNS OF AN UNHEALTHY FOREST: DISEASE AND OVERCROWDING



Several examples of factors that contribute to an unhealthy forest can be seen in the area around you. **Lodgepole Pines** grow in high density stands. Live or dead branches, shrubs, or grasses can act as **Ladder fuels** and allow a fire to climb up from the forest floor into the tree canopy. **Red Firs** are susceptible to pathogenic fungus called **cytospora**. The dried out diseased trees are more susceptible to wild fires and insect infestation.

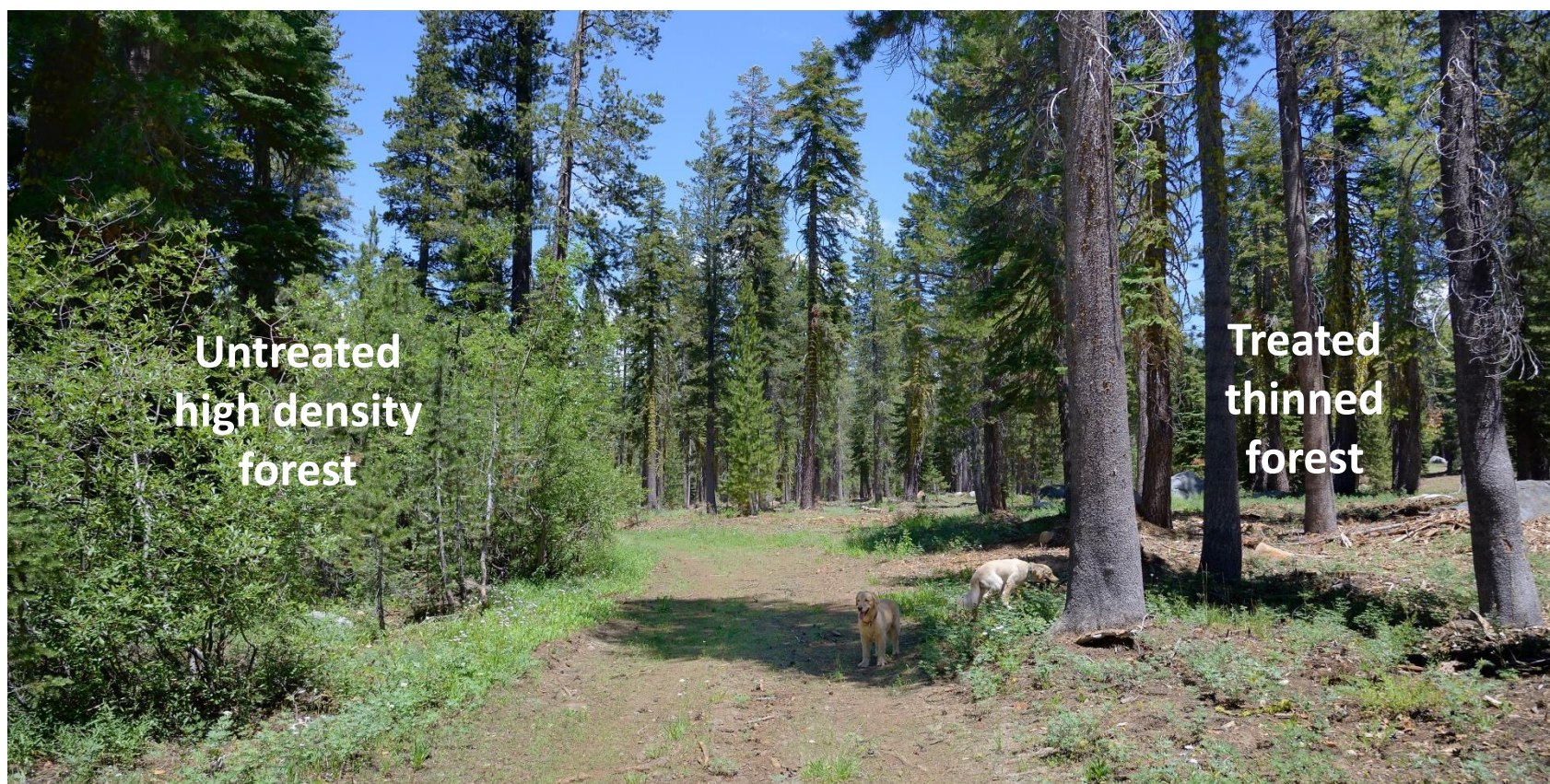


SIGNS OF AN UNHEALTHY FOREST: DEADFALL



Forests in the Sierras are typically thick with trees, brush and dead vegetation. In areas that have been logged, Lodgepole pines grow to very high densities that cannot be supported. Trees that are starved for nutrients and sunlight will die. As a result, there is a buildup of wildfire fuel like the fallen trees seen at this location. The deadfall provides the fuel for wildfires that can spread along the forest floor.

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY FOREST



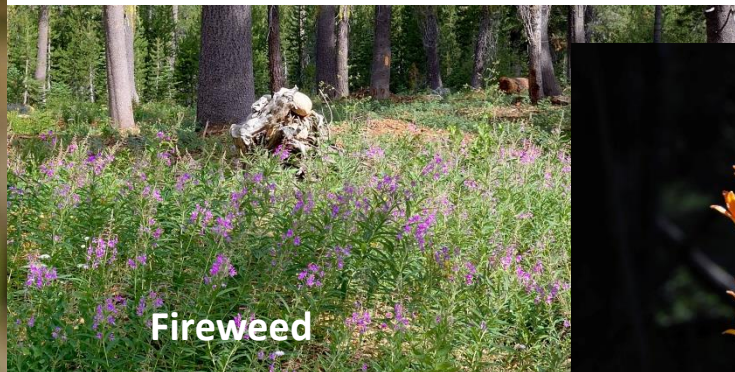
The area on the right was thinned according to modern forestry procedures. Only overcrowded and diseased trees are harvested. Some tree snags like the one with the sign are also left to provide homes for forest animals and birds. The remaining trees have space so that they are not competing with their neighbors for sunlight and nutrients in the soil. The understory, willows, bushes and wildflowers, will also have sunlight to grow.

WILDFLOWERS FOUND IN THIS AREA

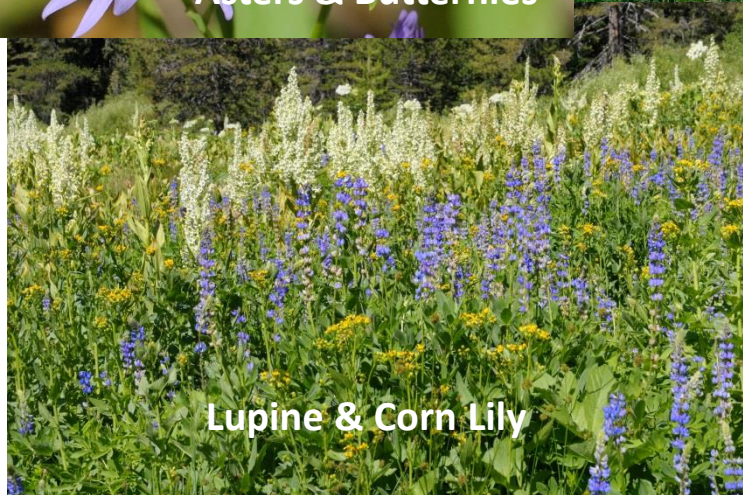
The tree thinning will allow sunlight to penetrate through the tree canopy and promote the growth of carpets of wildflowers.



Asters & Butterflies



Fireweed



Lupine & Corn Lily



Larkspur



Alpine Lily