

With Calif. drought over, fewer Sierra pines dying

By Gabriela Quirós, KQED

After five years of drought in which more than 100 million trees died in California – mostly ponderosa pines attacked by tiny bark beetles in the Sierra Nevada – aerial surveys this summer revealed fewer dead pines than last year, a positive turn that researchers hope will continue if the state has another wet winter.

“We’re all hoping for another wet year that would really get us out of this situation,” said Jeffrey Moore, aerial survey program manager with the U.S. Forest Service in Davis.

Results from the most recent aerial surveys won’t be available until November, said Moore. But the aerial surveys he and his team started in early July reveal that fewer ponderosa pines have died this year than in 2016, when a total of 62 million trees are estimated to have died. The majority of dead trees in California since the drought began have been ponderosa pines. Sugar pines, Jeffrey pines, white firs, oaks and incense cedars have also died.

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