



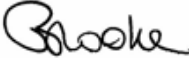
COLORADO

Division of Fire Prevention & Control

Department of Public Safety
690 Kipling Street, Suite 3000
Lakewood, CO 80215

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governor John Hickenlooper &
Members of the Colorado General Assembly

FROM: Paul L. Cooke, Director (Outgoing) 

DATE: April 25, 2016

RE: 2016 Wildfire Preparedness Plan

Colorado law; specifically Section 24-33.5-1227 (2) (a), C.R.S. requires the Director of the Division of Fire Prevention and Control to develop an annual Wildfire Preparedness Plan, in collaboration with a representative of the County Sheriffs of Colorado, a representative of the Colorado State Fire Chiefs' Association, the Director of the Office of Emergency Management and the Adjutant General.

The Wildfire Preparedness Plan shall be designed to address the following:

- (1) The amount of aerial firefighting resources necessary for the state of Colorado at times of high and low wildfire risk;
- (2) The availability of appropriate aerial firefighting equipment and personnel at times of high fire risk to respond to a wildfire;
- (3) The availability of state wildfire engines and staffing of the engines at different levels of wildfire risk;
- (4) The availability of wildfire hand crews, including state inmate wildfire hand crews, at different levels of wildfire risk; and
- (5) A process for ordering and dispatching aerial firefighting equipment and personnel that is consistent with, and supportive of, the statewide mobilization plan prepared pursuant to Section 24-33.5-705.4, C.R.S.

The Wildfire Preparedness Plan shall also provide recommendations on the use of the Wildfire Preparedness Fund created in §24-33.5-1227 (1) (a), C.R.S.

Wildfire Preparedness Fund - History

The Wildfire Preparedness Fund (WPF) in Colorado was authorized by the 2006 Legislature through Senate Bill 06-096, which also appropriated funding for state fiscal years 2006 through 2010 to support implementation of the actions directed by the legislation. SB11-238 extended the annual



transfer of \$3.25 million by the Department of Local Affairs from the mineral leasing fund to the Division of Fire Prevention and Control for two years beginning July 1, 2012.

Senate Bill 13-270 amended Section 10-3-209 (4), C.R.S., and allows for appropriations to be made by the General Assembly for the Wildfire Emergency Response Fund and the WPF from insurance premium taxes (IPT) collected by the Division of Insurance in the Department of Regulatory Agencies prior to their transfer to the General Fund. However, SB13-270 did not make an appropriation for FY 2014-15 to the WPF.

The Department of Public Safety requested an annual appropriation of \$4,150,000 Cash Funds from the proceeds of insurance premium taxes to the WPF for FY 2014-15, FY 2015-16, and beyond for the ongoing funding of wildfire suppression functions within the Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC). The request was approved and the moneys in the WPF are now continuously appropriated.

Situation

Wildfires occur as unscheduled emergency events in wildland fuels (prairie or forest vegetation) and in fuels that include a combination of wildland and human introduced fuels such as houses and improvements. Wildfires involve or threaten human life, residential housing, other improvements, and natural resources.

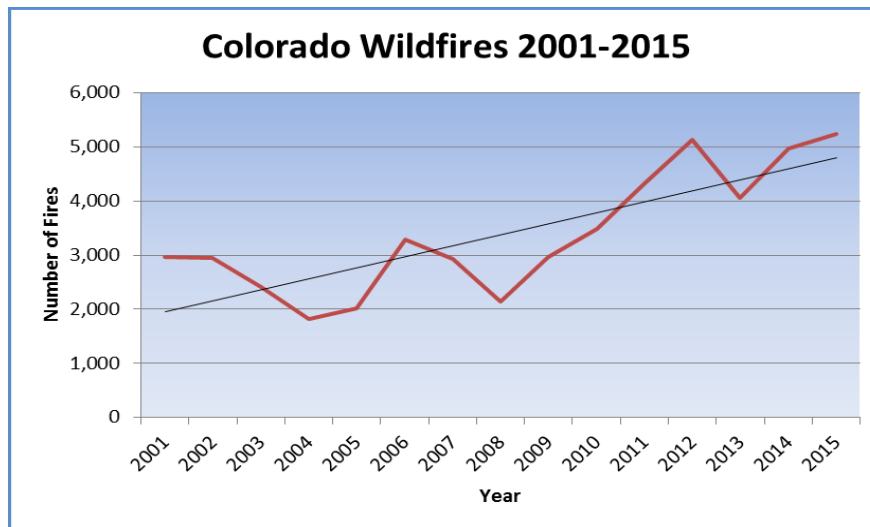
Wildfire knows no boundaries; it does not recognize jurisdictional responsibilities. A single wildfire often crosses private, county, state, tribal and federal lands and threatens communities, infrastructure, economies, and valuable natural resources that affect citizens, landowners and fire managers across all landscapes. In-as-much, wildland firefighting in Colorado is interagency in nature involving state, county, local, federal, and tribal partners.

Due to natural fuels build-up and increased population in wildland-urban interface areas, wildfires that exceed the control efforts of local and county resources are becoming more common.

Since the 1990s, the number, intensity, and complexity of wildfires in Colorado have been growing exponentially, and experts predict that it will continue to worsen. In the 1960s, the average annual number of wildfires in Colorado was 457, and these fires burned an average of 8,170 acres annually. By the 1990s the average number of fires and acres burned had more than doubled to about 1,300 fires with 22,000 acres burned. Between the 1990s and the 2000s, the average number of fires and acres burned more than doubled again.

In the "average year", there will be 4,536 fires in Colorado that will burn 102,284 acres. On average, 39 of these fires will be considered large wildfires¹ that will burn 98,820 acres of land and will result in \$41.8 million in fire suppression expenses.

¹ For statistical purposes, a large wildland fire is a fire of 300 acres in grass or 100 acres in timber or is of a complexity requiring a Type 1 or Type 2 IMT to manage.



In 2015, there were a total of 5,248 wildland fires reported by local fire agencies that burned 30,050 acres. Of these, a total of 29 were classified as large fires.

Preparedness Planning Assumptions

- Public and firefighter safety is the priority.
- Wildfires that exceed the capabilities of local and county resources will occur.
- Wildfires will threaten lives, property, and natural resources.
- No single entity or jurisdiction alone can suppress every wildfire.
- Successful suppression and extinguishment of catastrophic wildfires require organized interagency cooperation at all levels of government.
- Ensuring that state wildfire resources are identified, staffed, and positioned to respond will prevent some wildfires from becoming large catastrophic events and will assist in the containment and suppression of those wildfires that do escape initial attack.

Fire Season Outlook 2016

In late April and early May of every year, scientists and land managers produce coordinated outlooks for fire season across the western US to better prioritize resources. While it is too early to forecast with accuracy what the 2016 fire season will bring, the current National Predictive Services models indicate a near average to slightly below average fire core fire season.

- As a result of recent and forecast precipitation, an average progression of green-up is anticipated through May; reducing the severity and threat of an earlier than average onset to the 2016 Colorado core wildfire season.²

² The core wildfire season typically begins late May over southern Colorado and progresses northward through the remainder of the summer months.

- Long range predictors point towards average Colorado precipitation during the core fire season (June-July-August), but above average temperatures.
- **Near Average to Slightly Below Average** fire activity is projected in Colorado for the core fire season months (June-July-August). Abundant grass fuels from previous growing seasons and recent spring moisture may contribute to an increase in ignition and total acres burned for 2016 compared to the 2015 season.

Colorado's Wildfire Management Goals

Suppression costs escalate significantly as fire size increases. A wildland fire becomes a local emergency before it evolves into a State, then regional, then national incident. Colorado's wildfire management program should continue to hold as a high priority the strengthening of first response firefighting forces to safely and effectively suppress wildland fires.

Fast, aggressive, initial attack on new fires (for fires where full suppression efforts is the appropriate management response) can reduce the number of mega fires that may burn hundreds of homes and cost the taxpayers tens of millions of dollars in suppression costs. The safety of firefighters and the public will continue to be the first priority in all fire management activity.

DFPC's goal for wildfire management is to keep all wildfires with values at risk smaller than 100 acres and to suppress all fires in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas at less than ten acres, 98% of the time.

Enabling Objectives

Because DFPC's role is primarily to support local and county firefighting organizations, in order to achieve this wildfire management goal, accomplishment of the following enabling objectives will be necessary:

1. Generate an incident assessment for every fire within 60 minutes of report or detection.
2. Deliver the appropriate aviation suppression resources to every fire within 60 minutes of the request.

Aviation assets will be strategically located based on preparedness levels, interagency situational awareness of fire activity, weather, National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) indices, location of other aerial assets, etc.

2016 Wildfire Preparedness Plan

Following is a summary of the activities that will be implemented to address the required components of the annual Wildfire Preparedness Plan as well as facilitating the achievement of DFPC's wildfire management goals:

Wildland Fire Management

Wildland fire management services, technical assistance, and will continue to be implemented and delivered to counties and local fire departments through the wildland fire operations branch, consisting of the Branch Chief of Wildland Fire Operations and the Area and Regional Fire Management Officers (FMOs).

Aerial Firefighting Resources

The 2016 plan for DFPC aerial firefighting resources will be based on wildfire risk and need, as well as available funding, and may include any number of potential arrangements. To the degree practicable and possible, the minimum deployment of DFPC aerial firefighting resources will be:

Multi-Mission Fixed-Wing Aircraft – In order achieve the goal of generating an incident assessment for every fire within 60 minutes of report or detection of a wildfire, DFPC will operate two fixed-wing multi-mission aircraft.

Rotor-Wing Multi-Mission Aircraft – In order achieve the goal of providing the appropriate aviation suppression resources to every fire within 60 minutes of the request, DFPC will operate a minimum of three helicopters through an exclusive-use contract.

Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs) – In order achieve the goal of providing the appropriate aviation suppression resources to every fire within 60 minutes of the request, DFPC will operate a minimum of two SEATs through an exclusive-use contract. DFPC will also administer a “Call-When-Needed” (CWN) program that will make additional SEATs available if the wildfire situation dictates the need for additional resources.

Principal funding for DFPC’s fire aviation program will be from a General Fund appropriation. The estimated total program costs for 2015 are **\$9,045,678**.

Suppression & Prescribed Fire Program

DFPC's Suppression and Prescribed Fire Program will address the required availability of state wildfire engines and staffing of the engines at different levels of wildfire risk; as well as the availability of wildfire hand crews, including state inmate wildfire hand crews, at different levels of wildfire risk.

The 2016 plan for state engines and firefighters will be based on wildfire risk and need, as well as available funding, and may include any number of potential arrangements, including:

- Strategically Located State Engines (with Permanent, Seasonal, and/or Interagency staffing)
- Strategically Squads, Modules, and Crews

To the degree practicable and possible, the minimum deployment of state engines will be:

- 4 DFPC staffed engines
- 5 state engines staffed jointly by DFPC and local agencies; and

Veterans Fire Corps Program

Senate Bill 15-205, which was signed into law on May 12, 2015, directs DFPC “to the extent practicable, should train, equip, and supervise hand crews employed by Veterans’ Fire Corps program in Colorado for wildland fire mitigation and suppression.”

In 2016, DFPC will convert the Ft. Collins Engine into a squad by adding 2 additional personnel. The resource will be available for initial attack as a squad, and will also form the overhead and supervision for a 20 person handcrew. The squad will partner with Veterans’ Fire Corps, BLM Team Rubicon (comprised of military veterans), and local government personnel to increase handcrew capacity in Colorado. When not involved in incident response, the squad will be activity involved in teaching courses to Veterans and local agencies, implementing fuels management projects, and planning and implementing prescribed fire projects.

State Wildland Inmate Fire Team (SWIFT) Crews

DFPC will continue to support the State Wildland Inmate Fire Team (SWIFT) crews operated by CCI; providing training, logistical and/or overhead support that may be needed to ensure operational readiness and hazardous fuel reduction projects.

DFPC will also ensure the maintenance of process for ordering and dispatching aerial firefighting equipment and personnel that is consistent with, and supportive of, the statewide mobilization plan prepared pursuant to Section 24-33.5-705.4, C.R.S. DFPC will provide the technical assistance and program management that identifies local, county, and state resources; their qualification to national standards; and their listing in interagency zone dispatch centers and in the Colorado Statewide Resource Mobilization System.

2016 Preparedness Fund Budget

The 2016 Preparedness Fund Budget estimate reflects funding specifically authorized and appropriated from §24-33.5-1227 (1) (a), C.R.S. It is based on state Fiscal Year 2016/17 that runs from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017.

**Division of Fire Prevention & Control
2016 Wildfire Preparedness Budget Estimate**

	FY 2013-14 ACTUAL	FY 2014-15 ACTUAL	FY 2015-16 ESTIMATE	2016 PLAN (FY 2016-17)
Beginning Fund Balance	\$2,152,158	\$1,809,075	\$3,209,034	\$3,624,958
Appropriation	\$3,250,000	\$4,150,000	\$4,150,000	\$4,150,000
Other Revenues	\$285,000 ³	\$95,000 ⁴	\$95,000	\$95,000
Total Revenue	<u>\$5,687,158</u>	<u>\$5,687,158</u>	<u>\$7,454,034</u>	<u>\$6,218,100</u>
Fire Aviation Program				
Salaries & Operating	\$255,581	\$157,216	\$188,659	\$0
SEATs (EU Contract)	\$1,082,750	\$0	\$0	\$0
Subtotal	<u>\$1,338,331</u>	<u>\$157,216</u>	<u>\$188,659</u>	<u>\$1,000,000</u>
Fire Management Program				
Wildland Fire Management Section Management ⁵	\$536,388	\$235,769	\$471,538	\$774,185
Planning & Prescribed Fire	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$307,404
FMO Salaries	\$876,919	\$628,718	\$754,462	\$1,026,805
FMO Operating	\$343,516	\$510,813	\$612,976	\$738,348
Subtotal	<u>\$1,756,823</u>	<u>\$1,375,300</u>	<u>\$1,838,975</u>	<u>\$2,846,742</u>
Suppression & Prescribed Fire Program				
Engine Crews & Operating	\$495,410	\$868,515	\$1,042,218	\$825,403
Severity	\$1,800	\$36,810	\$44,172	\$50,000
Veterans Fire Corps Program Support	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0 ⁶
Subtotal	<u>\$497,210</u>	<u>\$497,210</u>	<u>\$1,086,390</u>	<u>\$875,403</u>
Vehicle Maintenance Shop				
Salaries	\$38,733	\$39,259	\$47,111	\$49,645
Operating & Repairs	\$246,986	\$367,941	\$367,941	\$200,000
FEPP Engine Replacement	\$0	\$0	\$300,000	\$200,000
Subtotal	<u>\$285,719</u>	<u>\$407,200</u>	<u>\$715,052</u>	<u>\$449,645</u>

³ This amount represents a transfer from the Healthy Forests and Vibrant Communities Fund (HFVCF) pursuant to SB14-154.

⁴ This amount represents a transfer from the Severance Tax Operational Account pursuant to SB14-154.

⁵ This line includes funding for management of the Wildland Fire Management Section including a portion of the expenses related to DFPC Administration, Incident Business Office, and support of the Interagency Dispatch Centers.

⁶ Veterans Fire Corps Program Support is included in other operating lines, such as "Engine Crews and Operating".

Contingency					
Contingency		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,000,000
	Subtotal	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$1,000,000</u>
Total Preparedness Fund					
		<u>\$3,878,083</u>	<u>\$2,845,041</u>	<u>\$3,829,076</u>	<u>\$5,202,349</u>
	Ending Balance	<u>\$1,809,075</u>	<u>\$3,209,034</u>	<u>\$3,624,958</u>	<u>\$2,667,609</u>

DFPC may use the moneys in the Wildfire Preparedness Fund to implement the Wildfire Preparedness Plan, including:

- (a) purchasing, acquiring, leasing, or contracting for the provision of firefighting aircraft, engines and other vehicles, facilities, equipment and supplies for firefighting and other emergencies;
- (b) the retrofitting, staffing, maintenance, operation, and support of firefighting aircraft, engines and other vehicles; and
- (c) to provide funding or reimbursement for the purchase of fire shelters by volunteer fire departments in order to comply with applicable federal requirements.

DFPC may enter into agreements to provide firefighting services, including personnel or firefighting aircraft, engines, or other vehicles to federal, state, or local agencies.

Concurrence

The following organizations and individuals were consulted in the development of the Wildfire Preparedness Plan and concur with the recommendations contained therein:

For the County Sheriffs of Colorado

JUSTIN WHITESELL

Printed Name

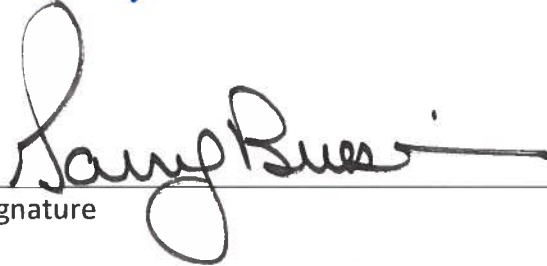


Signature

For the Colorado State Fire Chiefs'

GARRY BRISSE

Printed Name



Signature

For the Director of the Office of Emergency Management

Dora C. Reynolds

Printed Name



Signature

For the Adjutant General

Printed Name

Signature

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Signature

For the Adjutant General

H. MICHAEL EDWARDS

Printed Name

H. Michael Edwards

Signature

