



COLORADO

**Division of Fire
Prevention & Control**

Department of Public Safety

2023 Wildfire Preparedness Plan

Prepared For:

Governor Jared Polis and

Members of the Colorado General Assembly

April 2023

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
I. INTRODUCTION	3
II. HISTORY AND BACKGROUND	4
III. STATE SUPPORT TO LOCAL JURISDICTIONS	7
IV. 2023 WILDFIRE OUTLOOK	10
V. 2023 DFPC WILDFIRE RESPONSE STRATEGY & RESOURCES	12
VI. ADDITIONAL NEEDS & CONSIDERATIONS	25
VII. CONCLUSION	28
CONCURRENCE	29
ATTACHMENT A 2023 DFPC WILDLAND FIRE RESOURCE FUNDING GUIDELINES	30

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2023 Wildfire Outlook Summary

Current long range forecasts indicate that normal fire potential is expected across Colorado for the outlook period of April through July. Historically, that means the pre-green up period in early spring may have short-lived episodes of elevated fire potential in the lower elevations, especially along and east of the Front Range Foothills, in southeast Colorado, and in the San Luis Valley during dry and windy conditions. This is due to long-term, persistent drought and exposed carry-over fuels from last season's growth. In particular, the eastern plains remain under drought conditions, with the southeast corner in particular experiencing large areas of severe to exceptional drought with the highest potential for fire activity at least in the short term. It is important to note that while the 2023 pre-season outlooks do not indicate elevated fire potential early in the core fire season as opposed to previous years, wildfires will still occur and large wildfires are still likely. Periodic fire potential outlooks beyond July will be updated and released throughout the year.

2023 Planning Summary

The 2023 Wildfire Preparedness Plan is part of a holistic, comprehensive approach to wildfire management that includes suppression and response, fuels and forest management, and mitigation activities of all types. The plan is based on lessons learned from previous years, and also implements new tools and capacities as a result of recommendations of the Colorado Fire Commission and support from the Governor's Office and the Colorado General Assembly.

The Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control's (DFPC) overall approach to wildfire response includes:

- Collaboration with local, County, State and Federal agencies on prevention, preparedness, planning, and training prior to fires occurring;
- Utilization of early detection of fires to support decision making and informed actions;
- Coordination of an intelligence-based, state-wide dispatch and mobilization system to meet all fire-related needs, on a year-round basis, with a focus on rapid initial attack to limit duration, impacts, and costs where fire is unwanted;
- Utilization of fire response resources that meet Colorado's needs and are under the State's operational control; and
- Utilization of new technologies to find more effective and efficient approaches to fire management and response.

The DFPC will coordinate with local, State and Federal partners to leverage available resources to increase response capacity and effectiveness. This includes the continued use of extended contracts for existing DFPC aviation resources, continued utilization of resources and activities that were introduced in 2020 and 2021 (FireGuard detection and monitoring program, a DFPC contracted Large Air Tanker, DFPC Modules, an enhanced State Assistance Program, and pre-positioning of ground-based resources based on fire potential).

I. INTRODUCTION

The Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) is pleased to present the 2023 Wildfire Preparedness Plan to the Governor and the General Assembly. This Plan is adopted pursuant to C.R.S. 24-33.5-1227 and includes information on the wildfire outlook and the State's plan for responding to wildfires in 2023.

Wildfire Preparedness Plan

The Colorado Revised Statutes, specifically Section 24-33.5-1227(2)(a), 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 State-wide mobilization plan prepared pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes, Section 24-33.5-705.4.

The Colorado Revised Statutes Section 24-33.5-1226(2.5) requires the annual Wildfire Preparedness Plan to include approved uses for money in the wildfire emergency preparedness fund to provide wildfire suppression assistance to county sheriffs, municipal fire departments, or fire protection districts throughout the State at no such cost to such entities beyond those specifically listed in statute.

II. HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Increasing Wildfire Problem

Wildfire has always been a part of Colorado’s natural ecosystems. Drought conditions, warmer temperatures, an increasing number of homes in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas, and declining forest health have elevated wildland fire from a manageable natural resource problem to a growing public safety concern that has caused catastrophic damage in the last two decades. In order to address the growing wildfire problem in Colorado, decision makers at Federal, State, and local levels are taking a proactive approach and learning from the challenges faced by Colorado and other western states in recent years. Table 1 displays Colorado’s largest recorded wildfires. Looking at the historical data of the 20 largest wildfires in Colorado’s history, nine of those fires (45%) have occurred since 2018. Fifteen of those fires (75%) have occurred since 2012, and all 20 fires (100%) occurred since 2001. In addition, the three largest wildfires in Colorado’s history all occurred in 2020, exceeding the Hayman fire that previously held the top rank of acres burned since 2002.

Table 1

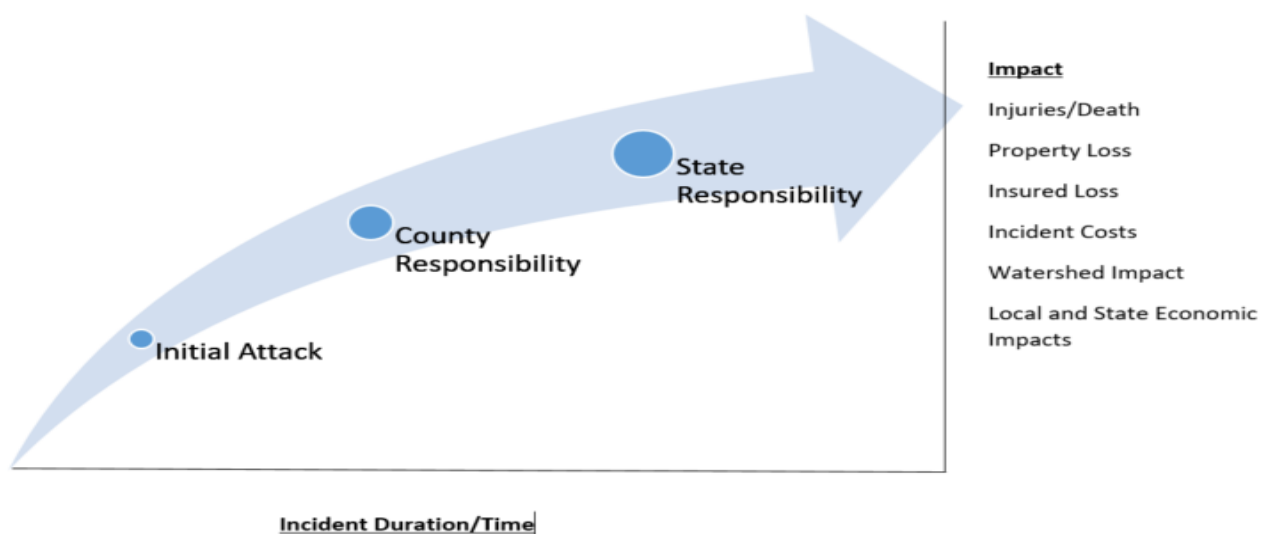
Colorado’s Largest Recorded Wildfires			
Rank	Fire Name	Acres Burned	Year
1	Cameron Peak	208,913	2020
2	East Troublesome	193,812	2020
3	Pine Gulch	139,007	2020
4	Hayman	137,760	2002
5	Spring Creek	108,045	2018
6	High Park	87,284	2012
7	Missionary Ridge	70,485	2002
8	West Fork	58,570	2013
9	416 Fire	54,129	2018
10	Papoose	49,628	2013
11	Bridger	45,800	2008
12	Last Chance	45,000	2012
13	Bear Springs	44,662	2001
14	MM 117	42,795	2018
15	Beaver Creek	38,380	2016
16	Bull Draw	36,549	2018
17	Badger Hole*	33,421	2018
18	Grizzly Creek	32,431	2020
19	Logan	32,546	2017
20	Burn Canyon	31,300	2002

**The Badger Hole Fire also burned in Kansas but this chart solely accounts for the acreage burned in Colorado.*

Historical data presents a clear picture of the increasing problem of large wildfires and climatologists predict the problem is only going to get worse. Core fire seasons are now an average of 78 days longer than they were in the 1970s and the United States burns twice as many acres as it did 40 years ago. Since the 1990s, the number, intensity, complexity, and impacts 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. These fires burned an average of 8,170 acres annually. By the 1990s, the average number of fires and acres burned per year had more than doubled to about 1,300 fires and 22,000 acres. Between the 1990s and the 2000s, the average number of fires and acres burned more than doubled again. From 2012 through 2022, Colorado had an average of 5,507 fires and 221,661 acres burned per year on all ownerships. In 2022, there were a total of 8,370 fires reported on all lands that burned a total of 56,403 acres. While 2022 was more of an average year for fire activity and impact, the December 2021 Marshall Fire (Boulder County) and the April 2023 403 (Park County) and Gageby Creek (Bent County) Fires serve as unfortunate reminders that wildfire is a year-round issue and every Coloradoan and part of the State is at risk to its impact.

Although fire suppression costs are typically what is reported when a large fire occurs, these costs only make up a fraction of the total cost of wildland fire. Further compounding the problem, other secondary impacts from wildfires include flooding and damage to critical infrastructure like watersheds. Colorado experienced this first hand in 2021, with post-fire flooding from the 2020 wildfires in Glenwood Canyon and Poudre Canyon, resulting in the loss of four civilian lives and continued highway closures that disrupted transportation and commerce throughout the summer. Flooding and debris flow events are expected to occur in these areas for multiple years. Secondary impacts can extend beyond the State's borders, with the Colorado River alone providing water for drinking, agriculture, and hydroelectric power for over 40 million Americans, including the cities of Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Tucson, and San Diego. As displayed in Figure 1, as frequency, size, and duration of unwanted wildfires has increased, the negative impacts to lives, property, and economies has correspondingly increased.

Figure 1 Fire Duration and Impact



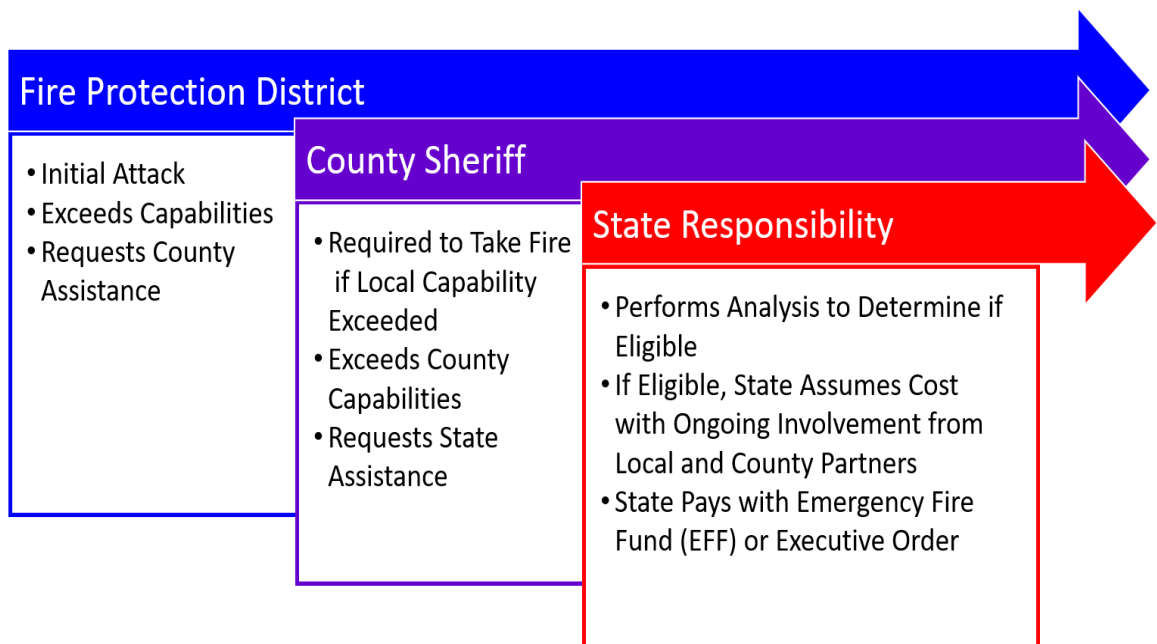
These trends are expected to continue and the wildfire issue is expected to continue to grow more complex based on the the following projections:

- The number of homes in Colorado’s Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) is projected to increase from 300,000 to 720,000 homes by 2030.
- By 2050 the area burned nationwide is expected to double to 20 million acres per year.
- Colorado is expected to experience up to a five-fold increase in acres burned by 2050.
- State Demographers expect Colorado’s population to grow from 5.5 million people to 8.5 million people by 2050.

While Colorado may experience times of low fire occurrence, the overall long-term outlooks and trends require robust preparedness planning. We must continue to evaluate ways to improve our preparedness, response capacity, coordination, and collaboration.

How Fire Works in Colorado

Wildfire protection responsibilities on non-federal lands in Colorado follow a hierarchy of local jurisdiction, to the County Sheriff, and finally to the State of Colorado. The Chief of a Fire Protection District is responsible for fires that occur within the boundaries of their district and that are within their capability to manage (C.R.S. 29-22.5-103(1)(a)). It is the duty of the County Sheriff to assume the responsibility for coordinating fire suppression efforts for: fires that occur in the unincorporated area of the county; or for fires that exceed the capabilities of a fire protection district (C.R.S. 30-10-513(1)(a)). When a wildfire exceeds the capability of the county to control or extinguish, the Sheriff shall request assistance from DFPC (see C.R.S. 30-10-513(1)(d)). The Director of DFPC may assume any duty or responsibility given to the Sheriff, with concurrence of the Sheriff (C.R.S. 30-10-513(2)).



III. STATE SUPPORT TO LOCAL JURISDICTIONS

Before a fire exceeds a local jurisdiction's capability, the State offers resources and support in the early stages of a fire. This assistance can come in the form of ground resources, aviation resources, funding, and technical assistance. After a fire exceeds a local jurisdiction's capability and a fire becomes State Responsibility, the State will continue to provide resources and will also assume management and financial responsibility for fire suppression and other associated costs.

State Assistance Fires

The DFPC State Assistance program is intended to encourage rapid initial attack actions where fire is unwanted, to reduce the size, duration, costs, and impacts of wildfires. In 2021, the Colorado General Assembly provided \$1,800,000 in dedicated, ongoing funds to cover the cost of providing these critical Enhanced State Assistance resources to local jurisdictions to help limit the duration and impact of wildland fires. Key elements of the State Assistance program include:

- Funding and resources for local and County responsibility fires. The fire does not have to exceed the capacity of a Fire Department or the County to receive State Assistance.
- Enables local agencies to respond to their next incident and for volunteer firefighters to return to their regular jobs.
- Funding and reimbursement for aviation, handcrew, and other resources during the initial attack phase of fires on non-federal lands. Ordered resources are based on the Closest Forces concept to reduce response times, whether they are State or Federal agency managed resources.
- Funding support for pre-positioning of resources during periods of elevated fire potential and activity.
- Support to local agencies including DFPC Engine, Module, and Overhead resources and technical assistance from DFPC fire management staff.
- A total of 223 local jurisdiction fires have received aviation and handcrew funding and resources in the last five years: 2022 (33 fires), 2021 (31 fires), 2020 (52 fires), 2019 (32 fires), and 2018 (75 fires).
- In addition to the 33 wildfires in 2022 that received traditional State assistance, there were another 117 instances where Enhanced State Assistance was utilized to pre-position resources based on severity conditions, provide additional resources to augment local capacity, as well as assistance with Search and Rescue incidents.

While 2018 and 2020 were record setting years for wildland fires, it is important to note there are numerous examples of successful initial attack actions every year. The majority of these incidents never become State Responsibility incidents and for those that do, incident size, duration, impacts, and costs are significantly reduced. In 2021, there were 25 agencies in 21 different counties that requested State assistance for aviation and handcrew resources on 31 incidents. Notable examples of State Assistance fires that occurred in 2022 include: the NCAR Fire (west edge of City of Boulder), the PAWS Fire (in Pueblo City limits), the 37E Fire (Larimer County just north of LaPorte), the Perins Peak Fire (La Plata County just west of the City of

Durango), and the CR 15 Fire (Yuma County). With effective response from the local agencies and support from DFPC, these fires never expanded to become State Responsibility fires and had minimal costs and impacts despite their proximity to significant values at risk. DFPC has already provided Enhanced State Assistance to numerous local agencies in March and April 2023. Data from the last five years and anecdotal evidence show the approach of early detection and rapid initial attack actions are having an impact in Colorado. Several of these fires would have become longer duration, costly, destructive State Responsibility fires without Enhanced State Assistance to support local agencies.

State Responsibility Fires

If the Sheriff believes a County Responsibility fire has exceeded their capacity to manage, they notify DFPC. DFPC field staff and the Sheriff conduct an assessment to evaluate if County capacity to manage the current and projected incident complexity has been exceeded. The DFPC Director approves the incident for State Responsibility based on assessment of the County's capacity and the availability of State funds. If the incident is approved for State Responsibility, DFPC assumes cost and management responsibility, along with ongoing involvement from local and County partners.

Funding for State Responsibility fires comes from two sources: the Emergency Fire Fund (EFF) or Governor's Executive Order (EO) utilizing Disaster Emergency Fund (DEF) or other State Funds. Key elements of the EFF program include:

- Created in 1967, with no significant updates other than slight increases in funding levels.
- Counties participate on a voluntary basis, and not all Counties are part of the program.
- Participating Counties contribute an annual amount based on assessed valuation and forested acres. The current formula and methodology does not support inclusion of eastern plains Counties.
- DFPC is the steward of the EFF funds, which are utilized for fires in contributing Counties that qualify for State Responsibility.
- Annual assessments currently equal \$1 million per year, which is typically depleted within a few days of a large fire. This often occurs by late spring or early summer, requiring EO requests and approvals for every individual State Responsibility fire that occurs for the remainder of the calendar year.

The number of State Responsibility fires has continually increased since the creation of the Emergency Fire Fund (EFF) in 1967, as displayed in Table 2. From 2010 through 2019, there were 74 State Responsibility Fires with an estimated \$168,000,000 in EFF and State suppression costs alone, as outlined in Table 3 below. It is estimated that \$95,000,000 of these State costs are eligible for reimbursements through FEMA Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAG). In 2022, there were five State Responsibility Fires with estimated suppression expenses of approximately \$3,900,000 in State funds and another \$10,300,000 in Federal funds. These numbers do not include local agency suppression costs, property losses, insured losses, recovery costs, secondary impact (flooding, re-seeding), watershed impacts, water system infrastructure costs, or economic losses that resulted from those fires. These numbers

also do not include local, County, State, and Federal expenses on the other 8,000 plus wildfires in Colorado that were not State Responsibility incidents.

Table 2

Years	# of State Responsibility Fires (SRF)
1967 to 1969	0
1970 to 1979	1
1980 to 1989	8
1990 to 1999	15
2000 to 2009	65
2010 to 2019	74
2020 to 2025	24
Total	187

Table 3

Year	Number of State Responsibility Fires (SRF)	Estimated State Suppression Costs (EFF and EO)
2010	3	\$11,150,000
2011	11	\$11,281,000
2012	16	\$47,537,000
2013	9	\$36,891,000
2014	1	\$244,000
2015	0	\$0
2016	6	\$15,025,000
2017	10	\$6,453,000
2018	18	\$40,079,000
2019	0	\$0
2020	16	\$38,179,000
2021	3	\$2,704,000
2022	5	\$3,900,000
Total	93	\$213,443,000

IV. 2023 WILDFIRE OUTLOOK

Each spring season, fire scientists and land managers produce coordinated outlooks to assess wildland fire potential and activity to plan and prioritize resources more efficiently for the upcoming peak. While it is too early to forecast with accuracy what the 2023 core fire season will bring for certain, significant wildland fire potential is expected to remain normal in many areas of Colorado during the late spring and into the summer. This outlook is heavily weighted upon persistent conditions, continued average to below average temperatures over most of Colorado, and normal precipitation through April. Longer range outlooks show the potential for above average temperatures and slightly below normal precipitation in the southern half of Colorado in May and into June.

Current Conditions

This year's peak snowpack occurred about a month earlier than average and as of April 4th, seven of the eight major watersheds in Colorado have above average snowpack and snow water equivalent (SWE) levels. Watershed basins on the western slope are carrying 160% to 180% of average SWE, so when runoff occurs there may be some flooding later this spring. The Arkansas watershed in southeast Colorado is the one area currently below average at 94%.

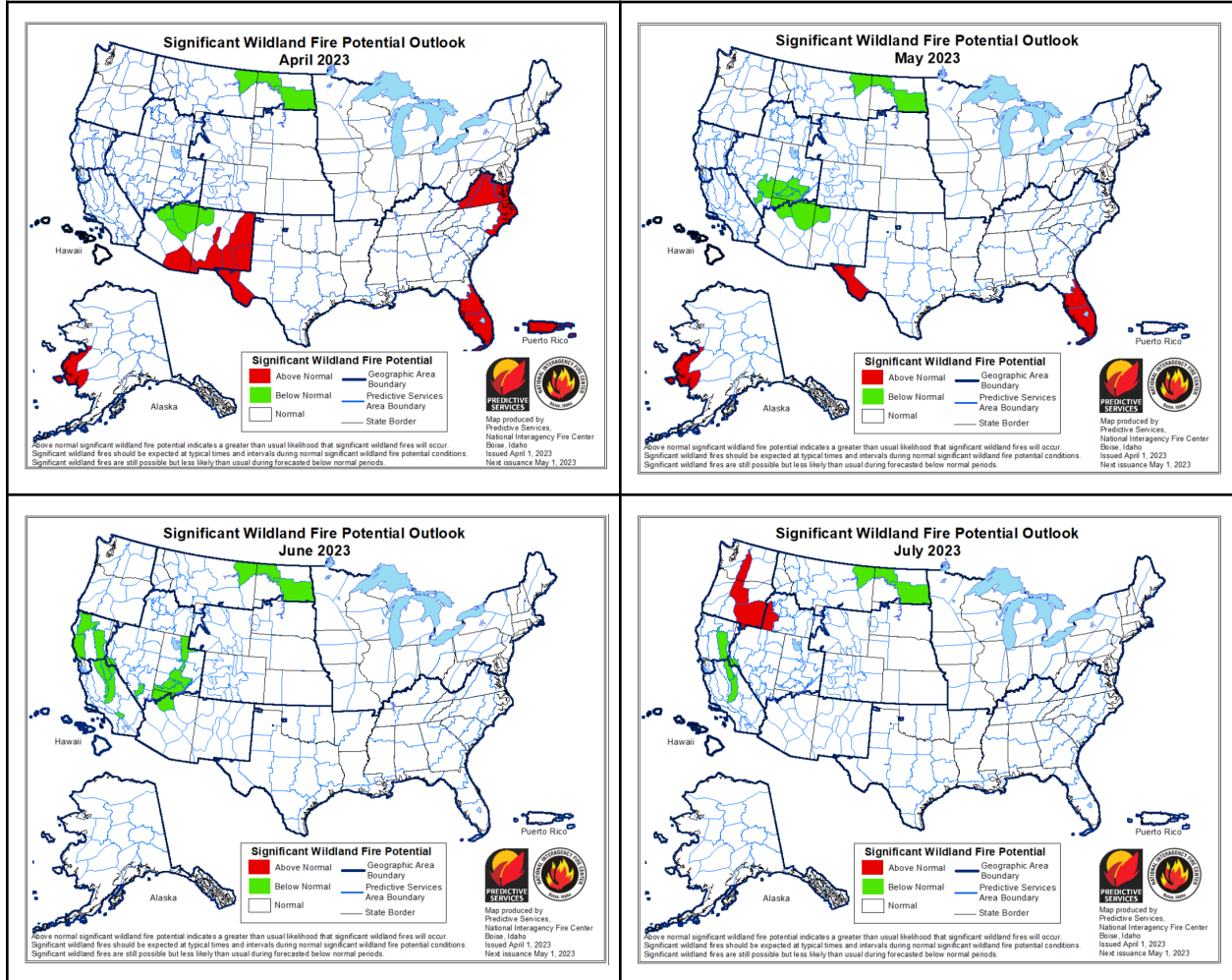
A timely and robust monsoon season in the summer of 2022 began a transition from long-term, persistently dry conditions. Significant winter snowfall has further reduced or in some cases eliminated drought conditions over much of Colorado, particularly on the western slope. Currently, drought conditions remain in the eastern half of Colorado, particularly in the southeast corner with areas of Severe to Exceptional drought. This part of the State has been experiencing frequent and large fires in March and April of 2023, and will be the area of the State with the highest fire risk for the foreseeable future.

Forecast Conditions

For the upcoming summer, there are some indications that the monsoon will be much weaker, mainly because of a significant change to El Niño conditions that will replace the three-year "triple dip" La Niña cycle that was previously in place. Despite this, the benefits of the winter and spring snowpack should carry forward through the summer, along with enough convective rainfall to limit fire danger potential at least through the current outlook period, ending in June. In addition to weather and other environmental factors, overall forest health and fuels conditions remain a concern for fire impacts and risk in the higher elevations of Colorado, especially where there has been substantial beetle kill in the lodgepole pine stands and where heavy dead and down timber remains.

It is important to note that even in an average fire season in Colorado, there will be approximately 5,507 fires burning an average of 221,661 total acres, with large State Responsibility Fires likely occurring. The 2016, 2017, and 2022 calendar years were considered below average from a statistical standpoint. However, there were a combined total of 21 State Responsibility Fires in those years, with total fire suppression expenses of over \$25 million in State funds alone.

For the Full Seasonal Outlook briefing for the Rocky Mountain Area and recorded web briefing, please see the link on the Rocky Mountain Coordination Center website: https://gacc.nifc.gov/rmcc/predictive/outlook/rma_seasonal_briefing.mp4



V. 2023 DFPC WILDFIRE RESPONSE STRATEGY AND RESOURCES

Overview of DFPC Strategy

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.
- Wildfires will threaten water supplies for Colorado residents and non-residents.
- Wildfires have significant potential to threaten local and State economies.
- No single entity or jurisdiction alone can manage every wildfire.
- Successful suppression and management of wildfires requires 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, thereby mitigating the far reaching impacts of these large incidents.

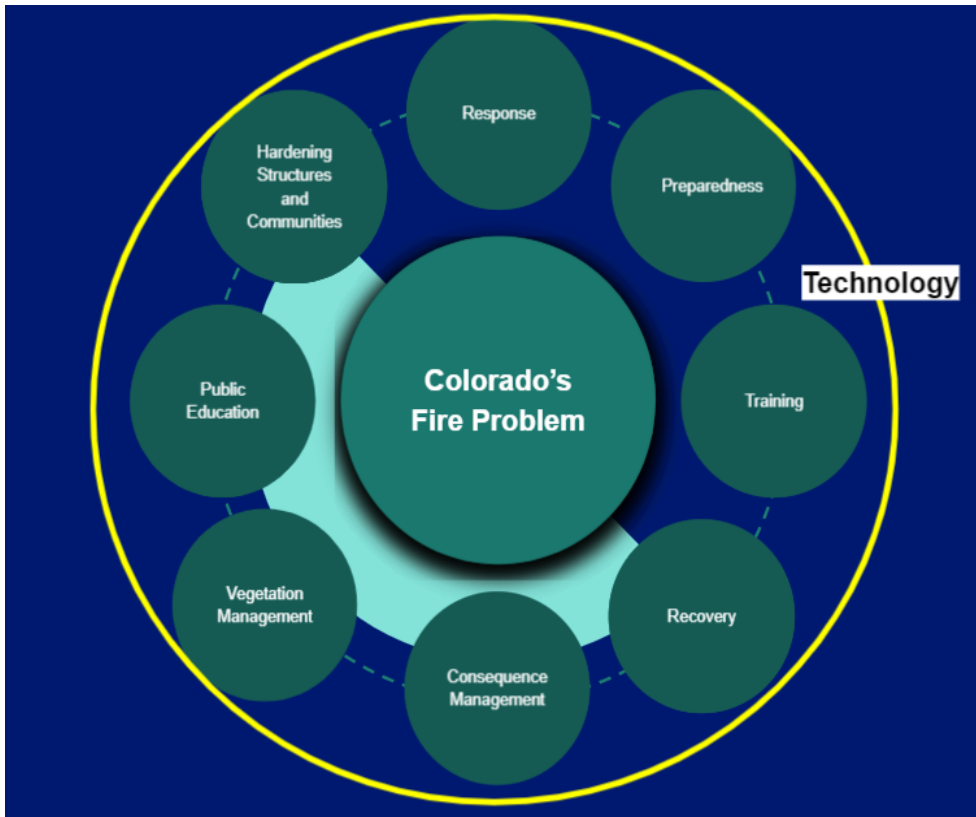
Leader's Intent on Incident Priorities

The following list, in order of numerical importance, shall be considered when developing incident strategies, tactics, and plan implementation:

- 1) Public and Firefighter Safety
- 2) Incident Stabilization
- 3) Property Conservation
- 4) Endangered Species, Environmental, and Economic Impacts
- 5) Resource Benefit

Wildfire is a complex issue, and there is no one simple, cure-all solution. In order to truly mitigate and reduce the likelihood and impacts of wildfire, a holistic approach will be required with investments in all of the areas shown in Figure 2 below. Additionally, new technologies need to be utilized and incorporated in order to plan and implement programs more effectively and efficiently. It has taken decades to get into the current wildfire situation, and it will take decades of focused, holistic investments in all of these areas in order to get out of it.

Figure 2 A Holistic Approach to Colorado's Wildfire Problem



Early Detection

The early detection of new fires is a critical component of the DFPC wildfire management strategy. These efforts are focussed on the identification of a fire and providing information to the jurisdictionally responsible agency on the fire's location, activity and behavior, potential, and proximity to values at risk. Notifying those agencies about new fires and providing associated information, allows them to take early action and make informed decisions. In areas where fire is unwanted and full suppression is the appropriate management response, early detection allows for initial attack actions while the fire is small, which increases the probability of success, reduces exposure to firefighters and the public, and minimizes fire size, duration, costs, and impacts.

The DFPC Multi-Mission Aircraft (MMA) utilize state-of-the-art infrared and color sensors operated by firefighters to find and locate fires. Maps, images, and other details about new fires are provided to fire managers, and can be provided to ground forces in a near real-time manner. Local, county, and Federal agencies can request a MMA to conduct detection missions over a specified area of concern, or to assist with fire and smoke reports that cannot be verified. DFPC will proactively conduct detection missions during times of elevated fire indices, high fire activity, or following periods of high lightning activity. Since the inception of the program in 2015, the MMAs have identified over 770 previously undetected fires. In calendar year 2021, the MMA

program set records for the number of new fires detected in one year (205 fires) and the number of new fires detected in a single day (38 fires found on August 27, 2021).



DFPC Multi-Mission Aircraft (MMA)

The FireGuard program is a national capability to detect and monitor wildland fires and was first implemented in California in 2019. In 2020, Colorado became the second State to pilot this concept, through a joint partnership with the Department of Defense to provide real-time wildfire detection and monitoring support to the State and interagency partners. The program increases Colorado's overall detection and monitoring capacity to provide early clarity and continual updates for fires, especially at night, in remote areas, and when aircraft cannot fly. Intelligence products provide approximate acreage, location, and local weather for incidents, and are disseminated via several existing common operating picture applications for use at both tactical and strategic levels. For example, during the Marshall Fire, FireGuard was the only tool available for monitoring fire location and spread when aircraft could not fly due to the high winds. The capability does not provide a detailed (1-meter) fire perimeter like the MMA or National Infrared Operations (NIROPS), but is accurate to within a few hundred meters. During the five-month 2020 Colorado pilot program, 860 updates and reports were developed on 107 total fires. In the less active 2021 Colorado fire year, 527 updates and reports were issued. During 2022, FireGuard detected 84 fires and provided 351 reports on wildfires in Colorado. Based on the success of the initial pilot efforts in both Colorado and California, the program was expanded in partnership with the United States Forest Service to provide national level coverage. Currently, there are two FireGuard nodes providing coverage to the entire United States, with one in Colorado and one in California. The 2023 National Defense Authorization Act includes language in Sec. 516 that authorizes the national program through 2029, and FireGuard was included in the President's proposed budget.

Aggressive Initial Attack and Enhanced State Assistance

Rapid, aggressive, initial attack on new fires (for fires where full suppression is the appropriate management response) can reduce the number of large fires that impact homes, communities, and infrastructure, resulting in millions of dollars in suppression costs, recovery costs, and insured losses. Limiting the number, size, and duration of large wildfires will reduce

exposure and increase our ability to provide for the top wildfire management priority of the safety of firefighters and the public.

The concept of Enhanced State Assistance (ESA) was one of the initial recommendations of the Colorado Fire Commission. In 2021, the General Assembly funded SB21-049 and authorized SB21-113. The ESA program expands on the historical State Assistance provided by DFPC and provides additional options, tools, and flexibility to increase the effectiveness of initial attack actions and support provided to local governments. Key resources and activities included under the expanded ESA program include:

- Aviation resources utilized by local fire agencies and counties during the initial attack and mutual aid phases of an incident. Aviation resources for additional operational periods can be approved by DFPC;
- Handcrew use by local fire agencies and counties during the initial attack and mutual aid phases of an incident;
- DFPC Engine, Module, and overhead resources utilized by local fire agencies and counties during the initial attack and mutual aid phases of an incident. These resources can be utilized for additional operational periods as approved by DFPC; and
- Severity assignments and pre-positioning of ground, aviation, and overhead resources based on Preparedness Levels (see Attachment A for the 2023 Wildland Fire Resource Funding Guidelines).

Traditionally, aviation resources have not been included as part of interagency wildfire mutual aid in Colorado and were billable resources from the start of a fire. Under the new Colorado Cooperative Wildland Fire Management and Stafford Act Response Agreement and the Statewide Colorado Operating Plan between DFPC and the Federal land management agencies, all resources including aviation, can be included under the new 24-hour mutual aid concept. This is a significant improvement for cooperative fire management in Colorado and will further encourage the use of appropriate resources during initial attack, reduce financial barriers to taking rapid actions, and reduce time and effort spent negotiating costs in the early phases of a fire. Mutual aid details and timeframes are identified in each individual County Operating Plan.

Preparedness Levels and Resource Availability

Wildland fire management is a collaborative, interagency effort in the western United States. No single State or agency is capable of responding to and managing all wildland fires on their own. Utilization of available resources from local, county, State, and Federal agencies is a necessity and standard practice on an annual basis.

Resources will be strategically located based on Rocky Mountain Area and Colorado preparedness levels, fire occurrence, weather, National Fire Danger Rating System indices, location of other resources, and other relevant factors. With the changes to Wildfire Emergency Fund (WERF) and the Enhanced State Assistance program, DFPC has increased ability to pre-position non-federal resources as needed within funding constraints. In an effort to leverage available resources and improve response efficiency, DFPC will coordinate with our Federal partners to send the closest available resource to requests for aviation and other types of

resources. State owned and managed aviation and other resources increases the overall capacity to respond to and manage wildfires within Colorado. They also provide a baseline level of resources under the operational control of DFPC, ensuring Colorado's needs are met regardless of movement of Federal resources due to national priorities and fire needs in other States.

Dispatching and Mobilization of Resources

DFPC will also ensure the maintenance of the process for ordering and dispatching aviation, equipment, personnel, and other resources that is consistent with, and supportive of, the state-wide mobilization plan prepared pursuant to C.R.S. Section 24-33.5-705.4, DFPC will: provide technical assistance and program management to identify local, county, and State resources; track and document their qualifications to national standards; and list those resources in the national mobilization system via the interagency zone dispatch centers, and in the Colorado Statewide Resource Mobilization System.

Colorado has historically utilized a "systems of systems" approach to mobilize fire-based resources, using a combination of local, Public Service Answering Points, County, State, and Federal systems. This approach often resulted in confusion and frustration for local fire agencies, as well as inconsistencies and inefficiencies in processes and effectiveness. Collaborative solutions have been identified to address these issues and are now being implemented as described below.

In 2020 and 2021, the Colorado Surge program has been used during rapidly emerging incidents (e.g., Marshall Fire), as well as extended attack fires that experienced a dramatic escalation of fire behavior and impacts (e.g., Cameron Peak). In these situations, the fire behavior overwhelmed assigned resources and posed significant threats to a myriad of values at risk. Local mutual aid networks had been exhausted, and the State was requested to provide Surge resources. While ultimately successful, implementing the Surge program revealed a variety of inefficiencies that made execution cumbersome, labor-intensive, and dependent on one or two key individuals. The Colorado Fire Commission recommended the establishment of the Colorado Coordination and Resource Management System (CCRMAS) as a baseline program to enhance mutual aid response for all fire-related incidents across the State. The Legislature approved this recommendation and the program is currently under development. A Unit Chief and four Resource Coordination Battalion Chief positions have been hired to lead the program's development. The Resource Coordination Unit has already implemented short-term measures to streamline notification and ordering processes, and formal rules for the program are currently being developed. The system has been refined to the point that we now have dozens of agencies and personnel being notified and updating their availability status based on fire activity and/or high end weather events, versus the historic model of making notifications and locating additional available resources after a rapidly escalating incident is already occurring. To ensure effective long-term solutions, stakeholders from around the State are working alongside DFPC to develop and implement long-term processes. Ultimately, the CCRMAS program aims to provide a single system and point of contact for local agencies to access fire resources from outside their area when their local capacity is exceeded.

The interagency wildfire dispatch system includes Fire Department, County, State, and Federal resources, and is utilized for wildfire incidents on all jurisdictions and ownerships. The system is successful in many areas and functions, but is based on an outdated model of seasonal wildfire response. Identified challenges and issues include: recruitment, retention, and burnout of dispatchers; year-round fire activity and increases in the number of tactical resources with no corresponding increases in dispatch capacity; reliance on seasonal employees and out-of-state detailers with no local knowledge; and reduced staffing to a five day per week standard business hours schedule from mid-fall to mid-spring, relying on answering services for after hours, weekend, and holiday wildfire support. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Forest Service (USFS), and DFPC led a multi-year Rocky Mountain Area Dispatch Efficiency study to analyze and address those issues. Key focus areas of the study included: consolidation of interagency dispatch centers; improvement of dispatcher recruitment and retention; meeting current wildfire dispatching needs, including the current inability to dispatch aircraft on a year-round basis; limited levels of funding and support by non-federal entities; and increasing capacity to meet projected future increases in year-round fire activity and acres burned. Study recommendations have been approved and will be implemented over the next two to three years as funding allows.

This spring, DFPC hired four Fire Resource Specialists to assist with wildfire systems management, troubleshooting, resource tracking, and mobilization of fire resources outside of their local area. Additionally, DFPC has hired Fire Dispatchers, Lead Fire Dispatchers, and are in the process of advertising for Deputy Center Managers at the new consolidated interagency dispatch centers in Fort Collins, Grand Junction, and Colorado Springs. The newly added State staff will be integrated into those centers, leverage existing Federal dispatchers, and allow centers to move towards more stable shift and staffing models, and allow for a sustainable work/life balance for all dispatch personnel. The overall goal of this new approach is to move away from the systems of systems and seasonal staffing models and to move towards a one-stop system for local fire agencies to contact when they need any type of fire resource from beyond their local area, that is 365 days per year effective with extended daily shifts and staffing.

Fire Intelligence

The DFPC Fire Intelligence Unit supports both fire preparedness and response through mapping, collection and analysis of fuels and weather data, fire behavior modeling, and decision support to dispatchers, incident commanders, and fire managers. The Unit assesses conditions and fire activity, helping to determine Preparedness Levels and strategic pre-positioning of resources before fires occur. The group also analyzes fire indices and provides data to dispatch centers to guide and determine response levels and resource allocation. Additionally, the Unit performs fire behavior modeling to predict and evaluate the spread and potential impacts of both new and existing wildfires to support fire managers in making informed decisions. An additional function of the Unit is to assist DFPC with internal planning and decision-making processes, providing information, insight, and expertise. Overall the Intelligence Unit uses a multifaceted approach to data analysis, modeling, and decision support to enhance DFPC and partner agency's ability to manage fires and protect communities.

Training

Firefighters from local fire departments are the first line of response for wildfire incidents. Fire departments across the State provide mutual aid to neighboring departments at the beginning stages of a fire. Many of the smaller, volunteer fire departments do not have access to adequate wildland fire personal protective equipment or basic training on how to safely respond to wildland fire incidents due to lack of resources. DFPC offers training to fire departments across the State at no cost, but does not have enough dedicated training staff to ensure that all firefighters have access to the necessary training to keep them safe.



DFPC Professional Qualifications and Training staff conducting training in La Veta, CO

The Colorado Fire Commission recommended increasing training staff and equipment at DFPC to better help meet the training needs of Colorado's fire service (See Recommendation 21-02 in 2021 Colorado Fire Commission Annual Report: Addendum). At the time this plan was prepared, this recommendation was not approved by the Joint Budget Committee during the Legislative budget process.

State Response Resources

DFPC Fire Management Staff

Based on stakeholder driven strategic planning efforts, the DFPC changed its field structure in 2019 to better support local government needs. At the request of local governments, the Division reorganized from two Area Fire Management Officers (FMOs) and ten Regional Fire Management Officers, to four District Chief (DC) and 14 Battalion Chief (BC) positions strategically positioned throughout Colorado to provide an improved level of technical assistance and support to local jurisdictions. As a result of additional funding in 2021, DFPC

was able to add four Deputy District Chief positions to further increase overall depth and capacity to support local fire agencies and counties.

The BCs are the first point of contact for local jurisdictions when they need subject matter expertise in any component of wildland fire management including training and qualifications, grants, planning and preparedness, prescribed fire management, as well as fire billing and reimbursement. As requested, the BCs provide technical assistance to local agencies during wildfire incidents including: resource ordering, tactical support, incident management, funding request, and serving in overhead positions on the fire as needed. The BCs and the County Sheriff jointly complete the assessment to determine if the County's capacity has been exceeded, and the BCs become Agency Administrators on State Responsibility Fires. BCs also direct local jurisdictions to contacts who can assist with needs provided by other DFPC Sections and programs.

Ground Resources

Ground-based resources in Colorado consist of a combination of local fire agency, county, State, and Federal agency resources. Local fire agencies provide the large majority of total firefighters and engines in Colorado, are typically the first resource to respond to most wildfire incidents, and are the key element to both successful mutual aid response and staffing of large, extended attack incidents. The 2023 plan for ground based resources will be based on wildfire risk, occurrence, need, available funding, and may include a number of potential arrangements for strategic location of these resources.

- **Engines:** The DFPC Engine Program provides assistance to local jurisdictions when local firefighting resources are overburdened due to number, complexity, or duration of fires. When areas of the State are under elevated fire conditions, DFPC engines may be pre-positioned on severity assignments for the purpose of supplementing local resources for rapid initial attack. Based on strategic planning efforts, feedback from local response agencies, and adoption of Colorado Fire Commission recommendations, the DFPC Resource Coordination Battalion Chiefs are working with local partners to develop regional strike team / task force capabilities to enhance initial attack capacity. Staffed DFPC engines are located in Sterling, Hudson, La Junta, Alamosa, and Montrose.



DFPC Engine conducting night operations on a wildfire.

These Type 3 and Type 4 Engines consist of four DFPC personnel and work with multiple local fire agencies to maximize response efficiency and availability, including co-location of DFPC and local fire agency resources. The DFPC Engines augment local resources for non-wildfire and all-hazard incidents when needed.

In addition to State-staffed Engines, the CDPS Logistics Branch and DFPC assist rural fire agencies through the Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP) program, by acquiring excess military equipment through the USFS, retrofitting and fabricating those vehicles into fire engines, which are then loaned to those smaller fire departments. Currently there are 87 FEPP engines assigned to 74 local fire agencies, with four newly fabricated FEPP engines scheduled to replace older units by the end of 2023.

→ **Modules:** The five existing DFPC Modules are groups of eight to ten firefighters and are located in Windsor, Black Hawk, Colorado Springs, Dolores, and Steamboat Springs. The Modules can respond to wildfires as a single unit, or they can partner with local government personnel when available or other DFPC Modules to form traditional 20 person handcrews. When not involved in wildfire response, the Modules are actively involved in providing training to local agencies, planning and implementing prescribed fire projects, and implementing fuels management projects. The Modules will also be trained and equipped in the near future to assist with non-fire incidents, such as search and rescue, when needed.

In addition to the existing Modules, DFPC plans to have a five-person Module based in the Granby area in partnership with local agencies by the spring of 2024. DFPC has also entered into a partnership with the USFS to have a pilot DFPC Fuels Module in the northern front range that is funded by Federal monies, staffed by DFPC personnel, and is focused on performing fuels treatment and prescribed fire projects on both Federal and non-federal lands.



DFPC Module hiking into a wildfire

- **State Wildland Inmate Fire Team (SWIFT) Crews:** DFPC will continue to support these handcrews operated by the Colorado Department of Corrections (DOC) to provide training, logistical and/or overhead support that may be needed to ensure operational readiness and hazardous fuel reduction projects, as available. SWIFT crews historically have been located in Buena Vista, Canon City, and Rifle, but currently it is anticipated that only one of these crews will be available in 2023.
- **Heavy Equipment Program:** DFPC will continue to partner with the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) on the availability of bulldozers, road graders, and other heavy equipment for wildfire suppression. CDOT provides the operators, heavy equipment and transports, while DFPC provides training, overhead for fireline supervision, and coordinates mobilization of resources. To date, 75 CDOT equipment operators have received basic training and DFPC is planning another operator training at the Colorado Wildfire and Incident Management Academy this June. These resources were utilized on several fires in 2018, including the Spring, Chateau, Lake Christine, and Weston Pass fires, and again in 2020 on the Pine Gulch and Grizzly Creek fires.

Aviation Resources

The 2023 plan for DFPC aerial firefighting resources will be based on wildfire risk, occurrence, need, and available funding, and may include any number of potential arrangements. Additional funding for aviation contracts was authorized by the General Assembly in 2021, allowing DFPC to contract for additional aviation resources, for longer duration periods, and to stagger resources to increase availability during the fall and spring. In 2022, temporary funding was provided by SB22-206 for one-time contracting of additional aviation resources based on pre-season outlooks and fire potential. The Governor's Office and General Assembly asked DFPC to develop a plan for additional aviation resources on an on-going basis to annualize those temporary resources that were provided by SB22-206. To date, those resources have not been included in the legislative budget process and will not be available for 2024. This includes a State Air Attack platform and a contracted Type 1 Helicopter that would be based in northwest Colorado. To the degree practicable and possible, the minimum deployment of DFPC aerial firefighting resources will be:

Rotor-Wing Aircraft

- **Type 2 Helicopters:** DFPC will operate two (2) Type 2 Helicopters with DFPC Helitack crews on Exclusive Use (EU) contracts of up to 230 days for each aircraft. The Canon City helicopter was brought on contract on March 1, 2023 and the Montrose helicopter was brought on contract on April 3, 2023. The aircraft and crews perform a variety of tasks including recon, transport of personnel and supplies, water delivery, and non-fire missions when needed and appropriate. Both helicopters are equipped with a hoist and Helitack crews will undergo training this spring and summer, which will increase capacity for DFPC to support local agencies in search and rescue operations or for medical extractions on wildfire events. Both are equipped with night operations capabilities making Colorado the only State fire agency in the nation providing night operations capabilities. Night operations of helicopters adds a level of risk and complexity and

therefore, will only be utilized when values at risk warrant the additional risk and when the pilot has already flown the incident during the day and is familiar with the associated hazards in the area.



DFPC conducting a search and rescue mission at La Plata Peak in Chaffee County with the contracted Type 2 Helicopter

- **Type 1 Helicopter:** DFPC also plans to have a temporary EU contract for one (1) Type 1 Helicopter based in northwest Colorado for one more year utilizing remaining limited time funding. The aircraft is a restricted category aircraft (will only transport suppressants and not personnel). Based on conditions and fire potential, DFPC is planning to bring the aircraft on June 1, 2023.
- **Type 1 (Firehawk) Helicopter:** DFPC will take delivery of its first Sikorsky S-70i (Firehawk) helicopter approximately on May 31, 2023. As this is an entirely new system for the State of Colorado, we are being deliberate in the training of the crews for the helicopter and the various support elements. We are planning a July 1, 2023, start date for basic wildfire operations of the helicopter.
- **Colorado Army National Guard (CONG) Helicopter resources:** Typically, the National Guard has Lakota, Blackhawk and Chinook helicopters and pilots that are trained, approved, and available for interagency wildfire response and support. Activation of these resources requires approval of the Governor. The CONG and DFPC partner each year to provide classroom and field training to CONG personnel and pilots to increase their familiarity with interagency wildfire operations, increase proficiency and effectiveness, and to receive approval from the USFS to fly on interagency wildland fires.

Fixed-Wing Aircraft

- **Multi-Mission Fixed-Wing Aircraft:** DFPC will operate two (2) State-owned, fixed-wing Multi-Mission Aircraft (MMA). The MMA are operated by contracted pilots and mechanics, and staffed by DFPC mission sensor operators. The home base for the MMA

is in Centennial, but they can be pre-positioned in other locations as needed. These resources perform fire detection, extended attack surveillance and support, and other non-fire mission support when needed and appropriate.

- **Single Engine Air Tankers:** DFPC will operate a minimum of two (2) Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs) through an EU contract of up to 240 days for each aircraft. The first EU SEAT was brought on contract on March 14, 2023. The second EU SEAT began on April 1, 2023. DFPC will also administer a Call-When-Needed (CWN) program that makes additional SEATs and Scooper aircraft available if the wildfire situation dictates the need for additional resources.
- **Large Air Tankers:** DFPC plans to operate one (1) Large Air Tanker (LAT) through an EU contract of approximately 120 days. Based on conditions and fire potential, DFPC is planning to bring the aircraft on May 22, 2023.



DFPC contracted Large Air Tanker on the 2020 Oil Springs Fire

Call-When-Needed Resources

DFPC will continue to evaluate and pursue other opportunities for Call-When-Needed (CWN) resources to enhance firefighting capabilities. DFPC currently has CWN contracts for an Air Attack platform, Scooper Aircraft, additional SEATs, and for a long-duration, high altitude Unmanned Aerial System (UAS). It should be noted that there is no guarantee of availability for CWN resources if they are needed, and costs and rates for those resources are typically higher than with EU contracted resources.

Other DFPC Support

- **Fire Investigations:** Fire cause and origin investigation responsibilities were transferred to DFPC from the Colorado Bureau of Investigation in 2018. DFPC provides support to local jurisdictions with cause and original investigations for wildland fires, structure fires, and vehicle fires, when requested by local jurisdictions. DFPC has one dedicated Fire Investigator and one Accelerant Detection Canine (ADC) to respond to these requests.

Table 4

Number and Type of Fire Investigations Completed by DFPC						
Year	Structure Fire	Vehicle Fire	Wildland Fire	Other Fire	ADC Requests*	Annual Totals
2018	59	14	6	4	N/A	83
2019	41	9	4	0	N/A	54
2020	31	0	4	3	N/A	38
2021	36	3	8	3	15*	50
2022	21	5	8	1	10	35

**Note: the Accelerant Detection Canine went into service on 5/1/2021.*

When the State is asked to be involved in wildland fire investigations, there is a proven track record of successes. For example, the State took the lead on the Lake Christine Fire (Eagle County), the Chateau Fire (Teller County), and the Spring Creek Fire (Costilla County) with law enforcement agencies making arrests in all three cases based on the fire investigations conducted by the State.



DFPC Fire Investigator and canine

VI. ADDITIONAL NEEDS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Colorado Fire Commission and Legislation Recommendations

In 2019, the first ever Colorado Fire Commission (CFC) was established by Senate Bill 19-040. The CFC is stakeholder-driven and is charged with evaluating fire-related issues across the State and developing meaningful recommendations for those issues, including wildfire and the Wildland Urban Interface. CFC membership consists of 24 voting members and eight Ex-Officio members, representing numerous disciplines and diverse geographic areas of the State. The CFC addressed three priority topics in its first year: wildfire funding, enhanced regional mutual aid, and fire data. The first CFC annual report to the Legislature and the Governor's Office was released in August of 2020 and contained five recommendations. Four of the five recommendations were addressed during the 2021 Legislative session in one form or another. The 2021 CFC report noted that the above issues are all interrelated in the overall goal of addressing fire in Colorado and its consequences. As a result, overlaps exist between the recommendations. Mutual aid is critical during initial attack when State assistance is utilized, so Recommendations 20-01 and 20-04 complement each other. Recommendations 20-03 and 20-04 look at the two sides of a wildfire incident, the initial attack phase when the fire is small and the State Responsibility phase when a large fire has exceeded local capabilities.

In year two, the CFC developed four recommendations that work together to further strengthen the Colorado Fire Service and its ability to respond to the ever-changing fire landscape in Colorado. The focus was on improving the coordination of fire-based resources, ensuring Colorado's firefighters have access to adequate training, developing a system to allow for data-driven decision making, and assisting local communities with risk reduction. Those recommendations are:

- Recommendation 21-01: Implement the Colorado State Fire Coordination Center to integrate 24/7 capability for dispatching Colorado's fire-based resources. This recommendation addresses coordinating fire-based resources across Colorado through the development of a State Fire Coordination Center. The Center will aid in the movement of fire-based resources during large events, support the Colorado Coordinated Mutual Aid System by providing year-round coordination and dispatching services, more effectively dispatch and track all State fire resources, including year-round fire aviation resources like the Firehawk helicopter.
- Recommendation 21-02: Enhance firefighter readiness through expanded training and certification opportunities. This recommendation increases access to training and certification for firefighters across Colorado by increasing the number of State training resources (trainers and mobile training props) and subsidizing the cost of firefighter certifications. Improving access to training and certification allows the members of the Colorado Fire service to increase proficiency in their day-to-day operations, which reduces the risk to both first responders and the communities they serve.
- Recommendation 21-03: Implement a Data Driven Program to Reduce Risk and Strengthen Colorado's Fire Service. This recommendation allows for integration of

various data sources into a user-friendly platform to increase data-driven decision making around Colorado's fire issues. Providing better data management for the fire service in Colorado is key to understanding gaps in data collection, informing the public, and determining where the fire service is going in the future and how to get there.

- Recommendation 21-04: Support the Statewide Community Risk Reduction Initiative. This recommendation creates a designated Community Risk Reduction Unit within DFPC that assigns a Community Risk Reduction Specialist, equipped with an educational trailer, to each quadrant of the State. The purpose of locating these professionals in each quadrant of the State will be to aid local jurisdictions in the development, implementation, and ongoing assessment and improvement of a risk reduction program for their community.

At the time of developing this plan, funding for recommendation 21-01 was provided in SB22-206. Recommendation 21-03 is included in SB22-013 and at the time of this report has advanced to House Appropriations. Recommendations 21-02 and 21-04 were included in the Governors proposed budget. 21-04 was included in the Long Bill, however recommendation 21-02 was removed from the long bill during the figure setting process. The Division will continue to work with the Colorado Fire Commission and the Governor's Office on this recommendation as access to training and certification programs for smaller fire organizations remains to be a critical need not only in Colorado, but nationally.

The CFC currently has three active sub-committees that are focussed on: Firefighter Recruitment and Retention; Prescribed Fire; and Delegations and Transfers of wildfire responsibility from Fire Departments to County Sheriffs, with recommendations scheduled to be included in the CFC annual report later this summer. DFPC will continue proactive engagement with these stakeholders and partners at the community, local, State, and Federal level in our continued efforts to proactively address the growing fire problem within Colorado. We are all confident that continual evaluation of capacity and resource availability to support initial attack from a local, regional, state-wide, and national basis for rapidly growing fires threatening citizens, visitors, natural resources, and economies, through on-going post-incident analysis and collaborative strategic planning efforts and activities will reduce our overall risk profiles. The Division will continue to remain focused on the diverse needs of all areas of the State as it relates to coordination and response to fire incidents and reduction of the likelihood or severity of an event when it does occur.

Other Needs

- **Firefighter Recruitment and Retention:** This is a critical issue for DFPC, the Fire Service in Colorado, and across the western US, with increasingly smaller candidate pools available to meet the needs of communities and fire service agencies. As noted above, the Colorado Fire Commission is working to identify issues and solutions in this area. DFPC has been and will continue to develop monetary and non-monetary solutions for our firefighters, with goals of: taking care of our firefighters; improving retention and professional development; and ensuring that we have experienced,

qualified, high quality personnel ready to assist Fire Chiefs and Sheriffs when they are experiencing a bad day or maybe their worst day ever.



DFPC TAVA Module based in Colorado Springs

- **Aviation Facilities:** Colorado has made significant investments in aviation resources, increasing overall State response capacity. Additional planning and corresponding investments are needed in support facilities for all State fire resources, but particularly for aviation resources. Over the last 24 to 30 months, there has been tremendous increases in costs and decreases in availability of facilities at airports across the State. At the time of this report, the status of long term facilities for the MMA program is uncertain. Having appropriate facilities is a key component of ensuring the preparedness and readiness of the State's fire management personnel and assets, as well as providing security and protection for high dollar aviation resources from damaging weather.
- **Fire Investigations :** SB23-013 (Fire Investigations) would create a Fire Investigation Fund in DFPC, and would provide resources (funding and full time employees) to investigate the cause and origin of fires, support local fire department investigations, reimburse other investigators acting under the direction of DFPC, and to accurately collect, analyze, and disseminate data to prevent or mitigate future fires. DFPC would be required to prioritize wildland fire investigations, but could use the fund for other fire investigations subject to available funding. At the time this plan was prepared, the bill had not passed through the Legislative process.
- **Hardening of Communities / Addressing the Wildland-Urban-Interface Issue:** As introduced, SB23-166 (Establishment of a Wildfire Resiliency Code Board) would establish a wildfire resiliency code board in DFPC within CDPS for the purposes of ensuring community safety from and more resilience to wildfires by reducing the risk of wildfires to people and property through the adoption of state-wide codes and standards. The proposed Board would consist of 21 appointed voting members with specific government or industry qualifications and three non-voting members. The board is required to promulgate rules concerning the adoption and administration of codes and standards for the hardening of structures and parcels in the wildland-urban interface in Colorado. At the time this plan was prepared, the bill had not passed through the Legislative process.

VII. CONCLUSION

Colorado should anticipate average wildland fire activity in 2023 based on current outlooks, weather patterns, and fuels conditions. Even in an average year, Colorado can experience over 5,500 wildland fires burning over 220,000 acres. As of the writing of this report, there have been numerous wildfires of note already this year. These fires have had relatively limited duration, costs, losses and impacts due to rapid, efficient initial attack actions by local agencies with support from DFPC. Based on expected conditions, fuels conditions, and wildland urban interface issues, Colorado will need the coordinated capacity of local, county, State, and Federal agencies to effectively respond and protect our communities, residents, and visitors.

The DFPC, along with its fire service partners and stakeholders, greatly appreciate the past leadership from the Governor and the Legislature for their willingness to be proactive in the providing of additional suppression resources through the 2021 Wildfire Stimulus Package to continue this aggressive initial attack response model. Those previous commitments will help in saving lives, property, and the overall impacts of wildfire in Colorado. We are also appreciative of the commitments to maintain a balanced approach in funding both mitigation and suppression programs, as well as the commitment to a more holistic approach to the overall fire problem in Colorado. Policy makers will need to continue to lean forward to develop and implement solutions to better prepare for and respond to wildland fires with an awareness that these incidents will continue to occur in Colorado. The DFPC will continue to monitor fire activity, resource availability, drought conditions, and extended weather forecasts to inform the appropriate individuals of any additional necessary requests for wildland fire support.

CONCURRENCE

This 2023 Wildfire Preparedness Plan was prepared by DFPC Director Mike Morgan. The following organizations and individuals concur with the recommendations contained therein:

For the County Sheriffs of Colorado

CSOC Printed Name

CSOC Signature

For the Colorado State Fire Chiefs

CSFC Printed Name

CSFC Signature

For the Director of the Office of Emergency Management

OEM Printed Name

OEM Signature

For the Adjutant General

AG Printed Name

AG Signature

ATTACHMENT A - Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control 2023 Wildland Fire Resource Funding Guidelines

Colorado State law requires the Division of Fire Prevention and Control to administer and manage programs to assist local jurisdictions with safe and effective wildland fire response. Wildland firefighting resources under these various programs are eligible for funding and reimbursement to any Colorado County Sheriff, fire protection district, or municipal fire department in accordance with the following guidelines. **Funding and reimbursement will occur to the extent that program funds are available, and notification and request procedures are followed.**

Enhanced State Assistance - Summary of Eligible Resources		
Resource – ¹	Mutual Aid Period – ¹	Beyond the Mutual Aid Period – ¹
Handcrew and Modules	Yes	Yes
DFPC Engines & Modules	Yes	Yes
DFPC Overhead	Yes	Yes
Type 1, 2, and 3 Helicopters	Yes	Yes
Single Engine Air Tanker	Yes	Yes
Large Air Tanker	Yes	Yes
Very Large Air Tanker - ²	Yes – ²	Yes – ²
Multi-Mission Aircraft	Yes	Yes
Aerial Supervision	Yes	Yes

Green = Resource eligible for funding and reimbursement to the extent program funds are available.

Yellow = Resource may be approved for funding and reimbursement on an incident by incident basis by a DFPC Deputy Section Chief (or designee).

Notes:

- 1 Funding and reimbursement is limited to non-mutual aid resources.
- 2 DFPC approval for usage of a VLAT must occur prior to ordering.
- 3 Initial attack is the priority for DFPC resources. Use of these resources beyond initial attack requires prior DFPC approval as noted above, and resources may be unavailable to remain on an incident due to emerging or other existing fires.

Notifications and Funding Requests

- If multiple air tanker drops and/or multiple hours of helicopter time occur on an incident, **notification must be provided to DFPC (Battalion or District Chief) as soon as possible,**
- **Prior DFPC approval is required for funding and reimbursement of any resource use beyond the mutual aid period.** Requesting agency and DFPC staff will discuss incident status, tactics, values at risk, etc. prior to DFPC decisions for these requests.
- If the requesting agency is expecting funding and reimbursement from the State of Colorado to pay for any amount of resource use, that agency must **formally notify DFPC and make that request** within 7 days of resource use. All formal funding and reimbursement requests should be made by using the online form that can be accessed at:

<https://goo.gl/forms/HWEYDjTXxE5iG4F33>. The requester must be prepared to provide the following information: Who requested the resource (Sheriff, fire chief, etc.); Fire Name; Incident Number (whenever available); Mutual aid end date and time; Resource Name(s); Dates of Use; and copies of Resource Orders (whenever available).

Enhanced State Assistance - Additional Details	
Not Eligible for Reimbursement	Resources utilized within their jurisdiction or utilized in accordance with pre-established Mutual Aid plans and agreements are not eligible for funding and reimbursement.
	Costs for resources utilized outside of these guidelines will be charged to the requesting agency(ies). Actual costs will vary by resource utilized.
Eligible Resources and Expenses	Resource(s) utilized on state and private land fires, and for fires that occur within the federal mutual aid areas as defined in the County Operating Plan.
	Refer to the County Operating Plan for Mutual Aid time periods and geographical boundaries.
	Resources must be qualified in accordance with applicable NWCG standard(s).
	Costs for Extended staffing (of DFPC managed resources), and Pre-position and Severity assignments (handcrews, modules, engines, overhead, and aviation resources). Approvals will be made prior to assignment, will be coordinated by DFPC District Chiefs, and will be based on DFPC Preparedness Levels, resource needs, and available funds.
	Logistical costs of lodging, camping, transportation/fuel and per diem.
	Resource funding and reimbursement beyond the mutual aid period may be approved by DFPC prior to use, based on factors such as fire potential, values at risk, defined mutual aid periods, boundary line fires, availability of funds, etc.
	Aviation - Only OAS or USFS interagency FIRE carded pilots and aircraft, ordered through the procedures outlined in the County Operating Plan.
	Aviation - Helitack related items (additional government helicopter personnel, support equipment and apparatus), as outlined in the Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management and appropriate supplements.
	Aviation - Additional aircraft support positions (aircraft dispatcher, tanker base support, aircraft timekeeper, etc.).
	Aviation - Expenses to maintain aircraft availability including contracted vendor support, crew, relief crew, and fuel and support trucks assigned to aviation resources.
Aviation - Daily Availability costs of aviation resources.	
DPFC ground and aviation resources utilized for prescribed fire, Search and Rescue (SAR), and other all-hazard incidents in support of local governments.	
Ordering Process	1. Requesting agency orders the appropriate Kind and Type of resource(s). Consult the County OP for the local, state, and interagency dispatch procedures to order aviation resources.
	2. Dispatch centers will use the "Closest Forces" concept.
	3. It is the requesting agency's responsibility to notify DFPC (District or Battalion Chief) when orders for multiple aviation resources occur as indicated on page 1 of these guidelines, or for resource use beyond the Mutual Aid period.

Contact your DFPC Fire Management Battalion Chief for additional clarification on these guidelines.