



COLORADO

**Division of Fire
Prevention & Control**

Department of Public Safety

2024 Wildfire Preparedness Plan

Prepared For:

Governor Jared Polis and

Members of the Colorado General Assembly

April 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2024 Wildfire Outlook Summary

Current long-range forecasts indicate that normal fire potential is expected across Colorado for the outlook period of April through July, except for the plains of southeast Colorado, which will continue to see increased large fire potential during the pre-green-up period through April. Historically, that means in early spring there may be short-lived episodes of elevated fire potential in the lower elevations, especially along and east of the Front Range Foothills, in southeast Colorado, and the San Luis Valley during dry and windy conditions. Overall, the winter of 2023-2024 was characterized by warm temperatures and above average precipitation. Snowpack was measured at or above 100% across the state. As a result, drought conditions have improved somewhat, except for continued moderate drought in the San Luis Valley and the Grand Valley, and abnormally dry conditions in the southwest and far western portions of the state. It is important to note that while the 2024 pre-season outlooks indicate limited elevated fire potential, wildfires will still occur and large wildfires are still likely, especially during high-wind events. Periodic fire potential outlooks beyond July will be updated and released throughout the year. DFPC will also utilize our internal intelligence and situational awareness capabilities to ensure we evaluate fire conditions and remain ready to assist our local partners as needed.

2024 Planning Summary

The 2024 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, and 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 2024 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 2024.

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. 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

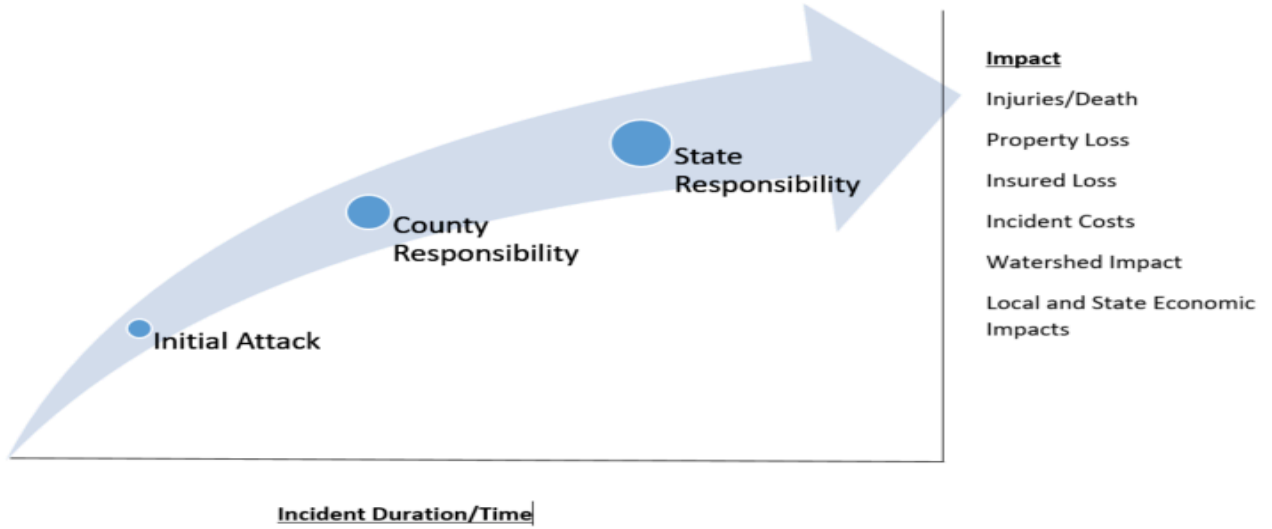
Colorado’s Largest Recorded Wildfires			
Rank	Fire Name	Acres Burned	Year
1	Cameron Peak	208,913	2020
2	East Troublesome	193,812	2020
3	Pine Gulch	139,007	2020
4	Hayman	137,760	2002
5	Spring Creek	108,045	2018
6	High Park	87,284	2012
7	Missionary Ridge	70,485	2002
8	West Fork	58,570	2013
9	416 Fire	54,129	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 2023, there were a total of 7,175 fires reported on all lands that burned a total of 40,996 acres. While 2023 was more of an average year for fire activity and impact, the December 2021 Marshall Fire (Boulder County), the April 2023 Gageby Creek (Bent County) and 403 (Park County) Fires, and the early October 2023 Iron Fire (Moffat County) 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 firsthand 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 the frequency, size, and duration of unwanted wildfires have increased, the negative impacts to lives, property, and economies have correspondingly increased.

Figure 1 Fire Duration and Impact



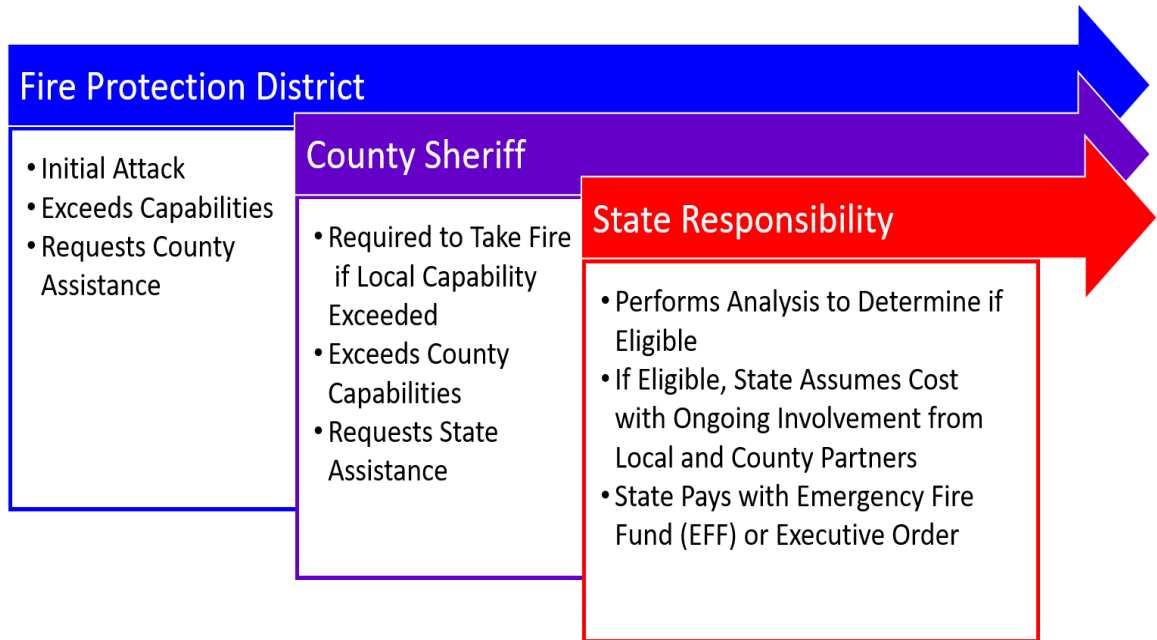
These trends are expected to continue and the wildfire issue is expected to continue to grow more complex based on the the following projections:

- 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.
- In 2023 there were a total of 87 instances where Enhanced State Assistance was used to: fund aviation and handcrew resources on local agency wildfires; preposition resources based on severity conditions; and provide DFPC ground resources to assist local agencies with wildfires.

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 in these and 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. Notable examples of State Assistance fires that occurred in 2023 include: the Hogback and Waterton Fires (Jefferson County WUI areas), the Coal Mine Fire (Archuleta County), the Allen Fire (Jackson County), the Thunder Fire (San Miguel County), and the Fountain Creek Fire (Pueblo County). With effective response from the local agencies and support from DFPC, these fires never expanded to become State Responsibility fires and had limited 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 2024. 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 do not support the 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 Executive Order (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. Approximately \$95,000,000 of those State costs were eligible for reimbursements through FEMA Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAG). In 2023, there were seven State Responsibility Fires with estimated suppression expenses of approximately \$10,350,000 in State funds and another \$13,800,000 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	Number 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 2023	31
Total	194

Table 3

Years	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
2023	7	\$ 10,350,000
Total	105	\$ 223,793,000

IV. 2024 WILDFIRE OUTLOOK

Each spring, 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 fire activity months. While it is too early to accurately pinpoint what the 2024 core fire season will bring, significant wildland fire potential is expected to remain normal in most areas of Colorado during late spring and into summer. Increased potential for wind events accompanied by warm, dry conditions in southeast Colorado indicate above normal potential is expected to continue into April before green-up. May and June will see typical large fire potential across the state. For July, fire potential on the West Slope will be trending from normal to slightly above normal, depending on how quickly hot and dry conditions develop, with the remainder of the state expected to continue normal fire potential.

Current Conditions

As of April 1, 2024, snowpack statewide is 109 percent of median. All major watersheds in Colorado have above average snowpack and snow water equivalent (SWE) levels. This is significantly lower than last year when the West Slope was 150 to 180 percent of normal. When runoff occurs, high water conditions may occur later in the spring in areas prone to flooding.

Beginning last summer, El Niño developed after 2 years of La Niña. As a result, temperatures have been above average across the state. Because of the increased precipitation in 2023 and above average snowfall over the 2023-2024 winter, much of Colorado is no longer in drought conditions. The San Luis Valley and the Grand Valley are currently experiencing moderate drought, and conditions are abnormally dry in the west, southwest, and far southeast portions of the state.

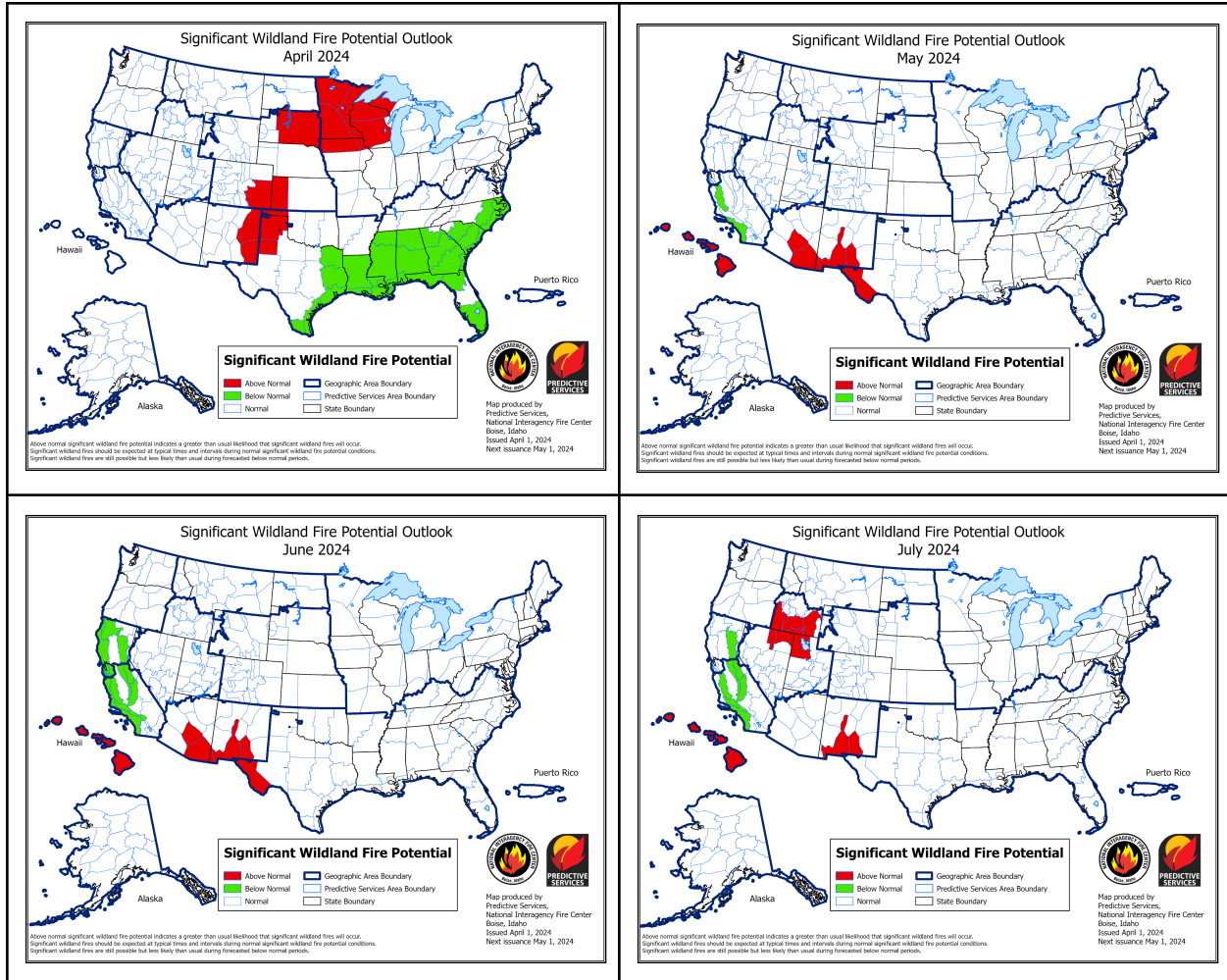
Forecast Conditions

Last year's wet spring on the eastern plains resulted in higher fine fuel growth than usual. While this was a benefit during the summer last year, it has increased the carry-over that is available to burn leading into the spring green-up period. While most of the eastern plains have seen enough rain and snow this winter into the early spring for this not to be a concern, the southeast has seen less precipitation and warmer temperatures. Given the increased potential for wind events accompanied by warm and dry conditions in southeast Colorado, above normal potential is expected to continue into April before green-up.

For the upcoming summer, there are some indications that El Niño will continue weakening, with typical conditions expected by the late spring. For April and into the summer months, above average temperatures will continue and drier weather is expected to spread from west of the Divide out onto the eastern plains. May and June will see typical conditions across the state. For July, fire potential west of the Divide will be trending normal, to slightly above normal, depending on how quickly hot and dry conditions develop. Longer-range forecasts are indicating above average temperatures and below average precipitation for the late summer and fall.

It is important to note that even in an average fire season in Colorado, there will be over 5,500 fires burning an average of over 220,000 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. In 2023, there were a total of 7,175 fires reported on all lands that burned a total of 40,996 acres.

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://www.nifc.gov/nicc-files/predictive/NMAC_Weather_Outlook.mp4



V. 2024 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.

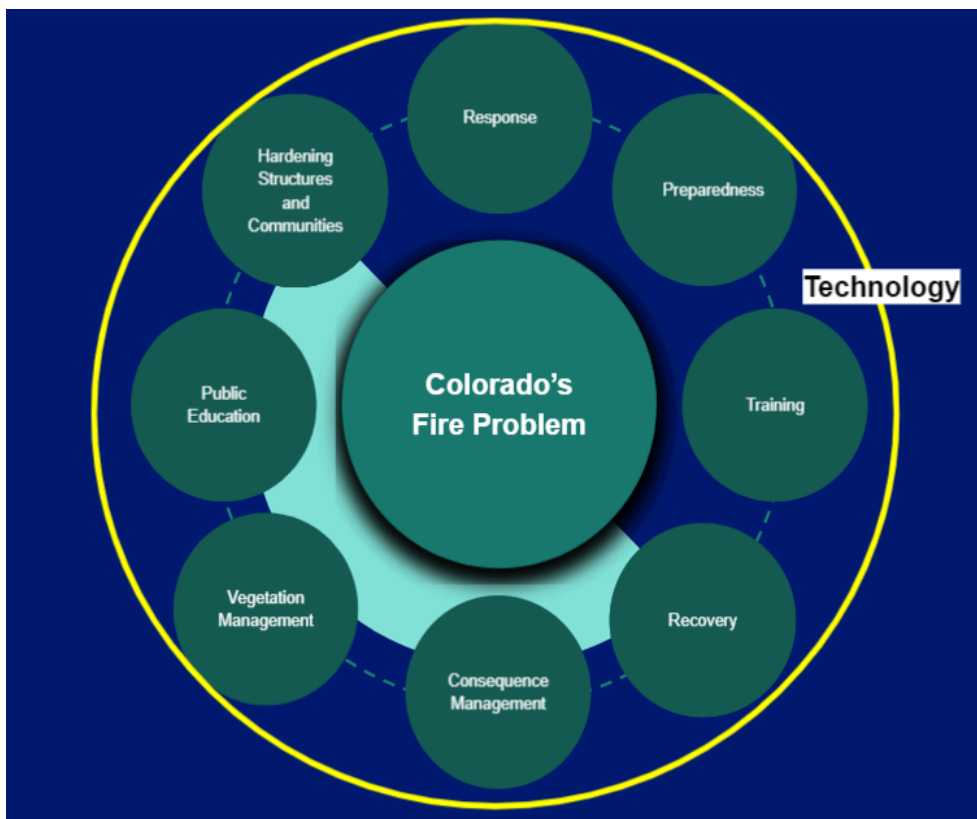
Leader's Intent on Incident Priorities

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. 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 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 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 850 previously undetected fires. In the 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. 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. In the State of Colorado for 2023, FireGuard detected 75 fires (5% of the overall FireGuard detections) and provided 486 polygon updates on those fires (3% of the national polygon count). The Colorado FireGuard task force detected 788 fires and provided 5,826 polygon updates for those fires. The Colorado FireGuard task force has primary responsibility for the Rocky Mountain, Great Basin, Southwest, Southern, and Eastern GACCs. Nationally, the Colorado and California task forces detected 1,519 fires and provided 15,423 polygon updates.

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 the Wildfire Emergency Fund (WERF) and the Enhanced State Assistance program, DFPC has increased its 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 increase 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 the 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 and 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 was 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 Mutual Aid System (CMAS) as a baseline program to enhance mutual aid response for all fire-related incidents across the State. The Legislature approved this recommendation. A Unit Chief and four Resource Coordination Battalion Chief positions were hired to lead the program's development, including implementation of 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 CMAS 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.

Over the last 12 months, DFPC hired six 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 Deputy Center Managers at the 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, 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 agencies' ability to manage fires and protect communities.

Intelligence products such as the Wildfire Incident Status Dashboard support local Fire Managers by providing resources that allow them to monitor fires statewide or within their county. The Fire Environment Update tab on the dashboard provides a consolidated location for information on conditions that may affect fire ignition or spread potential.



QR Code for the DFPC Fire Intelligence Dashboard

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 requests, 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 2024 plan for ground-based resources will be based on wildfire risk, occurrence, need, and available funding, and may include a number of potential arrangements for the strategic location of these resources.

- **Engines:** 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.

The DFPC Engine Program provides assistance to local jurisdictions when local firefighting resources are overburdened due to the 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. Staffed DFPC engines are located in Sterling, Weld County, 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 84 FEPP engines assigned to 68 local fire agencies. Four older engines were replaced with new fabricated FEPP engines in 2023, with an additional eight newly fabricated engines scheduled to replace existing engines in the next 12 to 18 months. Future engine upgrades and replacements will be performed as available funding allows.

- **Modules:** Modules are groups of five to 17 firefighters that perform a variety of wildfire management and other functions. DFPC has existing Modules located in Windsor, Black Hawk, Colorado Springs, Dolores, and Steamboat Springs. DFPC has reallocated existing funding and positions to create two new, smaller Modules in 2024, that will be located in Pueblo and Granby. 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.

DFPC has also entered into a partnership with the USFS to create 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. Part of this pilot effort includes the purchase and use of an Air Curtain Burner to evaluate an additional tool for slash, fuels, and risk reduction.



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 the Canon City crew will be available in 2024.
- **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, over 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, as well as initial attack by local fire departments across the state.

Aviation Resources

The 2024 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 to supplement DFPC's base aviation fleet with one-time contracting of additional aviation based on pre-season outlooks and fire potential. The Governor's Office and General Assembly directed DFPC to develop a plan for additional aviation resources on an ongoing basis to annualize those temporary resources that were provided by SB22-206. The resulting plan included recommendations for a second Firehawk helicopter (request fulfilled and in progress), a State Air Attack platform (request has not been fulfilled to date), and a contracted Type 1 Helicopter that would be based in northwest Colorado during the core fire season (recommendation has not been fulfilled to date). DFPC will continue to work with the Governor's Office, the General Assembly, and partner fire agencies to evaluate and assess Colorado's current and future aviation needs. To the degree practicable and possible, the minimum deployment of DFPC aerial firefighting resources in 2024 will be:

Rotor-Wing Aircraft

- **Type 2 Helicopters:** DFPC will operate two 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 5, 2024, and the Montrose helicopter was brought on contract on April 1, 2024. 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 the 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 add 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:** temporary funding for the EU contract for one Type 1 Helicopter that has been based in northwest Colorado for the last two summers has been exhausted.
- **Type 1 (Firehawk) Helicopter:** DFPC is scheduled to take final delivery of its first Sikorsky S-70i (Firehawk) helicopter by early May 2024, and expects to be mission-ready for wildfire operations shortly after that.
- **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 the 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 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 Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs) through an EU contract of up to 240 days for each aircraft. Both EU SEATs were brought on contract on March 15, 2024. 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 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 contract tentatively on May 15, 2024.



DFPC contracted a 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 a long-duration, high-altitude Uncrewed 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

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 a 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 continues to work with the Colorado Fire Commission and fire agencies across the state to assess statewide fire service training needs and gaps to determine recommendations for all of Colorado's firefighters to have the appropriate training and personal protective equipment to ensure they can serve their communities safely and effectively.



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

Fire Investigations

Senate Bill 23-013 (Fire Investigations) created a new Fire Investigations Branch within the DFPC Fire and Life Safety Section, with a primary focus on providing support and assistance to local fire and law enforcement agencies. The new program is a significant development in enhancing the State's fire investigation capabilities from performing basic origin and cause investigations to providing leadership and resources to creating the ability to take on multi-staged, multi-agency complex fire and explosion cases. The Fire Investigations Branch is currently being established, but will eventually consist of nine qualified investigators located around the state along with two accelerant detection canines.

A significant number of fire and law enforcement agencies in Colorado do not have fire investigation capabilities. Of the agencies that are fortunate enough to have a fire investigator, they are often restricted by time, experience, and equipment. DFPC resources will assist these agencies with investigations of: wildland fires; residential, commercial, single- or multi-family structure fires; and vehicle fires; while providing fire investigative training and education. As the program develops, it will utilize a comprehensive team approach that combines human expertise with cutting-edge technology to deliver a multifaceted approach to fire investigation, as part of a holistic statewide approach to fire prevention, preparedness, and response.

As the new Fire Investigations Branch is established, the number of investigations conducted and assistance provided by DFPC is expected to increase significantly from the previous capacity of one State Investigator and one canine detection unit.



DFPC Fire Investigator and canine

VI. ADDITIONAL NEEDS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Colorado Fire Commission

In 2019, the 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, with four of the original five CFC recommendations being addressed in one form or another during the 2021 Legislative session. In year two, the CFC developed four recommendations that worked together to further strengthen the Colorado Fire Service and its ability to respond to the ever-changing fire landscape in Colorado. The focus of the second round of recommendations 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. During the 2023 Legislative session, three previous CFC recommendations were funded and addressed:

- Recommendation 21-03: Implement a Data Driven Program to Reduce Risk and Strengthen Colorado's Fire Service. This recommendation allows for the 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.
- Recommendation 22-02: Creation of a Wildfire Resiliency Code Board. This recommendation creates a Code Board that is focused on the development and adoption of a Statewide minimum code based on wildfire hazards. See below for additional information.

Recent CFC efforts have been focused on: Firefighter Recruitment and Retention (currently active subcommittee); developing a statewide prescribed fire strategy (currently active subcommittee); and Delegations and Transfers of wildfire responsibility from Fire Departments to County Sheriffs (subcommittee work complete with HB24-1155 signed into law this spring). The CFC is also actively engaged in discussions about Colorado's power grid resiliency, and concerns about the availability and affordability of insurance.

DFPC will continue to maintain engagement with these stakeholders and partners at the community, local, State, and Federal levels in our continued efforts to proactively address the growing fire problem within Colorado. We will continually evaluate capacity and resource availability to support wildfire preparedness, response, and risk reduction from wildfires that threaten citizens, visitors, natural resources, and economies, through ongoing post-incident analysis and collaborative strategic planning. 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 the reduction of the likelihood or severity of an event when it does occur. At the time this plan was prepared, HB24-1272, which would provide for sunset renewal of the CFC had not passed through the Legislative process.

Wildfire Resiliency Code Board

Senate Bill 23-166 established a Wildfire Resiliency Code Board within DFPC for the purposes of ensuring community safety from and more resiliency to wildfires by reducing the risk of wildfires to people and property through the adoption of statewide codes and standards. The board consists 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 of codes and standards for the hardening of structures and reducing fire risk in the defensible space surrounding structures in the wildland-urban interface in Colorado.

The WRCB convened its inaugural meeting in October 2023 and has since met monthly, conducting a total of six full board meetings to date. The Board has currently established four advisory committees composed of board members with expertise in specific areas:

- Implementation and Governance Advisory Committee - responsible for ensuring that Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) code can be effectively implemented at the local level and for establishing procedures for the governing body to appeal the code.
- WUI Definition Advisory Committee - tasked with defining the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) and examining the implications of this definition on its practical application.
- Building Design Advisory Committee - responsible for ensuring that the code complies with standards for ignition-resistant materials and other structural development requirements aimed at mitigating the risk of wildfires.
- Site and Area Design - responsible for ensuring that the design of spaces and areas includes measures to create defensible and survivable zones that are resilient to wildland fires.

The WRCB is charged with implementing the statewide wildfire resiliency code by July 1st, 2025. Public hearings regarding the code will be held from April to June 2025.

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

- **Fire Management Statutes:** HB24-1155 (Modifications to Statutes That Guide the Management of Certain Public Safety Emergencies) was signed into law on April 4,

2024. This bill resulted from a unanimous recommendation from the Colorado Fire Commission, which updates statutory language to be in alignment with how wildfire is currently managed within the State of Colorado but does not change authorities or responsibilities for Fire Chiefs, Sheriffs, or DFPC. A key component of this bill is the clarification that all types of fire departments can transfer responsibility for a wildfire to the County Sheriff when their capacity has been exceeded, and not just Title 32 Fire Protection Districts.

- **DFPC Strategic Plan:** DFPC's initial strategic planning efforts were completed in 2017 and 2018 with the development of the DFPC agency strategic plan, and the DFPC Strategic Plan for Supporting Colorado's Fire Agencies. Many of the recommendations and objectives of those plans have been implemented in partnership with the Governor's Office, the General Assembly, the Colorado Fire Commission, and our partners across the State. DFPC began the process of updating our strategic plan in the fall of 2023, with a series of surveys and in-person meetings around the state that included both agency employees and external stakeholders. We anticipate having an updated strategic plan in place by July 2024 to guide DFPC's future work.

VII. CONCLUSION

Colorado should anticipate average wildland fire activity in 2024 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 several 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 commitment 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. Policymakers 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 2024 Wildfire Preparedness Plan was prepared by DFPC and 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 2024 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.** The 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 Battalion Chief for additional clarification on these guidelines.