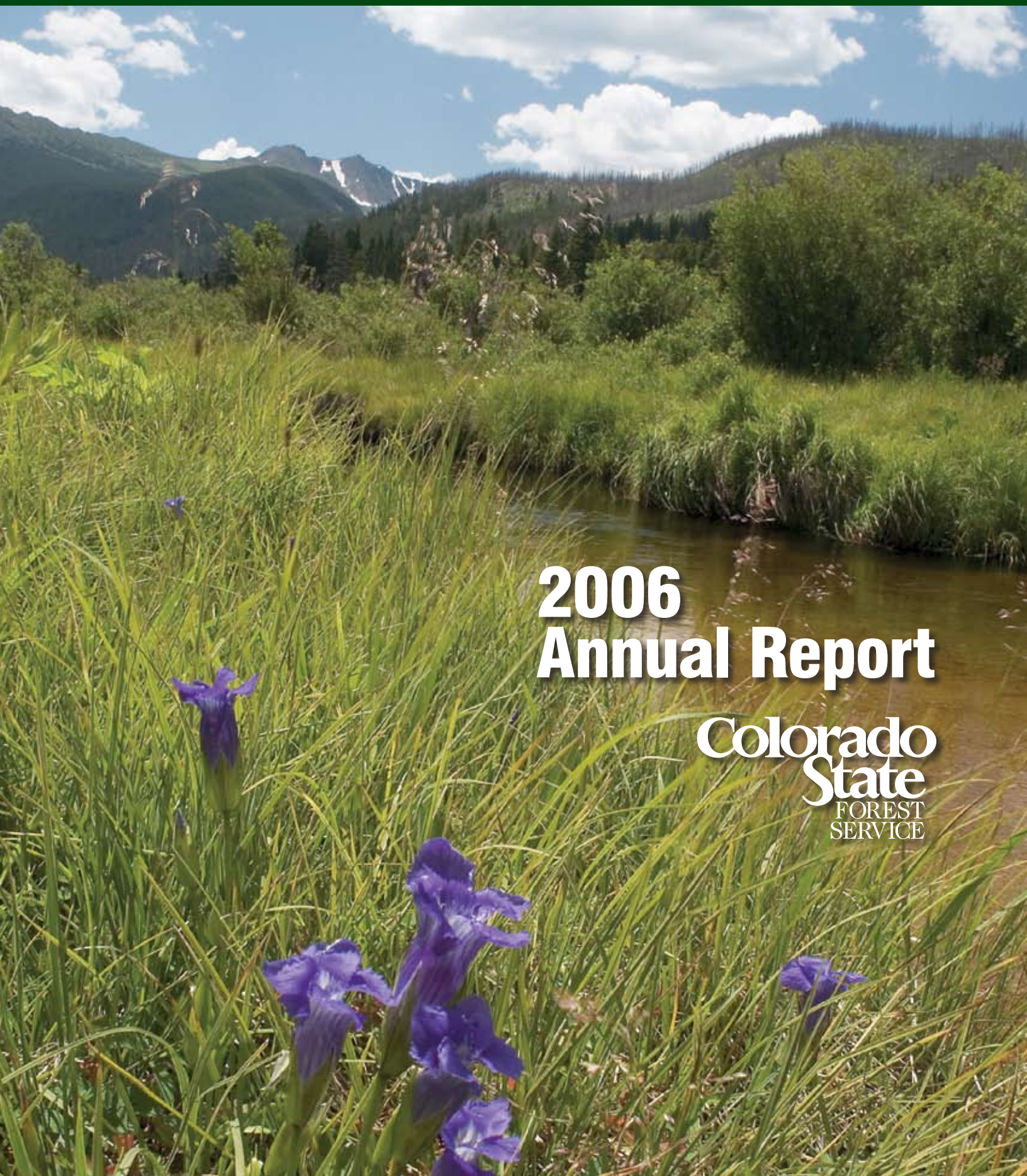


# 2006 Annual Report

Colorado State Forest Service

# Reflections on 2006

*Jeff Jahnke, Director*

This document is a celebration of the successes of the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) over the past year. Our organization continues to evolve steadily in a direction that will achieve our strategic priorities. The evolution is occurring on many levels, including:

• In 2006, wildfire preparedness received significant support from the Colorado Legislature. A Wildfire Preparedness Fund was created, and $3.25 million appropriated per year for the next five years, to implement annual Wildfire Preparedness Plans. This legislation will significantly increase our effectiveness in protecting lives and property throughout Colorado.

• CSFS was challenged in 2005, both internally and externally, in bringing the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) concept to fruition. However, 2006 saw a groundswell of activity throughout the state. Communities and individuals are grasping the importance of planning and the effectiveness of this tool in protecting communities from wildfire. As with the adoption of any new idea, this one took time – but 2006 results were extremely encouraging.

• CSFS also is undergoing an evolution from a traditional model of forestry – serving the public one-on-one as technical advisors – to being a leader in maintaining Colorado's forests. No longer can we merely disseminate information; we must ask the question, "What should be happening to improve the conditions of Colorado's forests?" As a result, we are emphasizing more collaborative efforts with our partners, other agencies, researchers, and individuals. These relationships serve to promote, focus, and interpret ongoing research to apply to ground-level forestry activities.

• Participation in forestry issues by those who have not traditionally come to the table is increasingly common, as exemplified in recent years by the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership Roundtable, the Northern Colorado Bark Beetle Cooperative, and multiple ongoing collaborations across the state in community wildfire protection planning. Citizens are recognizing their rights and responsibilities toward improved forest health and adequate wildfire protection and are adding their voices to the decision-making process.

• The CSFS evolution also involves an increasing number of younger foresters as a major force in CSFS. This cadre is one of our greatest strengths and well worth celebrating. They are emerging from academic instruction with a broader, overall focus on forestry issues. This is a significant change from an earlier model of "getting out in the woods and marking trees" (although, of course, foresters still love to do that). They are joining us with the skills necessary for 21st century forestry and are motivated by a new way of working toward achieving healthy forest conditions.

• One of our greatest successes last year was the institution of the area forester concept. As a result of examining the CSFS structure and identifying both forestry and personnel needs, CSFS functionally divided the state into northern and southern regions. We have found this new approach to be a huge success organizationally.

Evolution is a dynamic process, as are forested ecosystems. CSFS will continue to evolve to address forest health and fire protection effectively in Colorado, and we, too, will remain dynamic. This is the core of our strength and also of our success.

The successes of 2006 are due to the contributions of each of our dedicated employees and the support of our invaluable partners. We thank you very much and look forward to 2007.

# Strategic Priority: Fire preparedness and response

***Provide leadership in wildland fire protection for state and private lands in Colorado and reduce wildfire-related loss of life, property, and critical resources.***

## Wildfire Preparedness Receives Support from the Colorado Legislature

Wildfire preparedness received significant support from the 2006 session of the Colorado Legislature. Introduced as Senate Bill 096 (SB 96) by Senator Jack Taylor, with wide support in the House and Senate, the General Assembly directed the creation of a Wildfire Preparedness Fund in the State Treasury and also appropriated $3.25 million per year for the next five years to implement annual Wildfire Preparedness Plans.

An annual Wildfire Preparedness Plan is developed by a collaborative group comprising the state forester, a representative of the County Sheriffs of Colorado, a representative of the Colorado State Fire Chiefs' Association, the director of the Division of Emergency Management, and the adjutant general or his or her designee. The Colorado State Forest Service implements the plan, drawing on the Wildfire Preparedness Fund.

Prior to SB 96, funding for the availability of state preparedness resources was not specifically dedicated and therefore not consistently available for long-term contracting or staffing of wildland response resources.

The significance of SB 96 is in the consistency it provides for acquiring long term aviation contracts, staffing wildland fire engines, supporting National Guard resources, and training and using Colorado Department of Corrections State Wildland Inmate Fire Teams. In wildland fire management, consistency in the availability of resources leads to increased efficiencies and effectiveness in response to wildland fires.

Having state wildfire resources 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.

*Flames from the Big Fish Fire threatened historic cabins near Steamboat Springs in 2002, Colorado's worst fire season on record.*

Wildfires occur as unscheduled emergency events in wildland fuels (prairie or forest vegetation) and also in fuels that include a combination of wildland and human-introduced fuels (houses and improvements). Wildfires involve or threaten human life, residential housing and other improvements, and natural resources. Due to natural fuels build-up and increased population in wildland urban interface areas, wildfires that exceed the control efforts of local and county resources are becoming more common and more complex. Wildland firefighting in Colorado is interagency in nature involving state, county, local, federal, and tribal partners. Colorado State Forest Service is lead state agency for wildland fire as identified in the Colorado State Emergency Operations Plan.

## Making Strides in Community Wildfire Protection Planning

After a challenging beginning in the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) in Colorado, many groups and communities began to embrace the concept in 2006. The upsurge of completed plans, as well as those in progress, has risen dramatically. Planning processes have followed several models including subdivision "spark plugs" who initiated plan development; a Cooperative Extension director who facilitated the process; and a homeowners association that revised its Forest Stewardship Plan to include the necessary components of a CWPP. The plans also cover a wide geographic area and diverse demographic types.

All the plans follow Colorado's minimum standards, and CSFS foresters, local emergency managers, and representatives of local government were involved in all processes detailed below.

- Santa Fe Trail Ranch Estates near Trinidad completed its CWPP last year, due in large part to two residents, Dave Skogberg and Diana Novacek, who were unflagging in their promotion of FireWise practices and community wildfire protection planning.
- At the Woodmoor subdivision near Monument, community members took the opportunity to add elements of a CWPP as they revised their Forest Stewardship Plan.
- The Buckskin Heights CWPP process was driven by local residents, and meetings were facilitated by Emily Saeli, a graduate student in CSU's Department of Forest, Rangeland, and Watershed Stewardship.
- Three CWPPs have been completed in Jackson County due to the facilitation skills of Deb Alpe, a local Cooperative Extension director responsible for community capacity development.

Approaching the planning through a mixture of process models demonstrates that these plans can be developed at a variety of levels and through diverse courses of action. It also depicts the flexibility and adaptability necessary to address the needs of the community.

We congratulate the communities that have taken this critical step toward protecting lives and property from wildfire.

*Resident Diana Novacek conducts a tour of the Santa Fe Trail Ranch Estates during the subdivision's community wildfire protection planning process.*

## Mauricio Canyon Fire

On Saturday, January 7, 2006, nature underscored the fact that wildland fires can occur year-round.

The last snow in south central Colorado had been in November 2005. Two pile burns, which had been conducted months earlier when snow covered the ground, flared up; normally, in January, snow would be piled two to three feet high. The fire spread rapidly in winds that exceeded 70 miles per hour. Homeowners in the Big Horn subdivision, near Aguilar in Las Animas County, had only one road out – directly in the face of the rapidly advancing fire.

Sunday night the weather had changed dramatically; it was snowing, but the fire also was still burning. By Wednesday, January 11, the snow had melted and the fire made a small run back to the west toward national forest lands. Finally, on January 16, control of the fire had been returned to Las Animas and Huerfano counties.

The Mauricio Canyon Fire started in Huerfano County and spread into Las Animas County, burning almost 4,000 acres and destroying five homes and 10 outbuildings. Costs for fire suppression exceeded $500,000. The fire was an important lesson for Colorado: Wildland fires can occur at any time, especially during drought conditions.

# Strategic Priority: Healthy, diverse, and sustainable forest conditions

*Ensure healthy, diverse, and sustainable forest conditions on a meaningful scale throughout Colorado.*

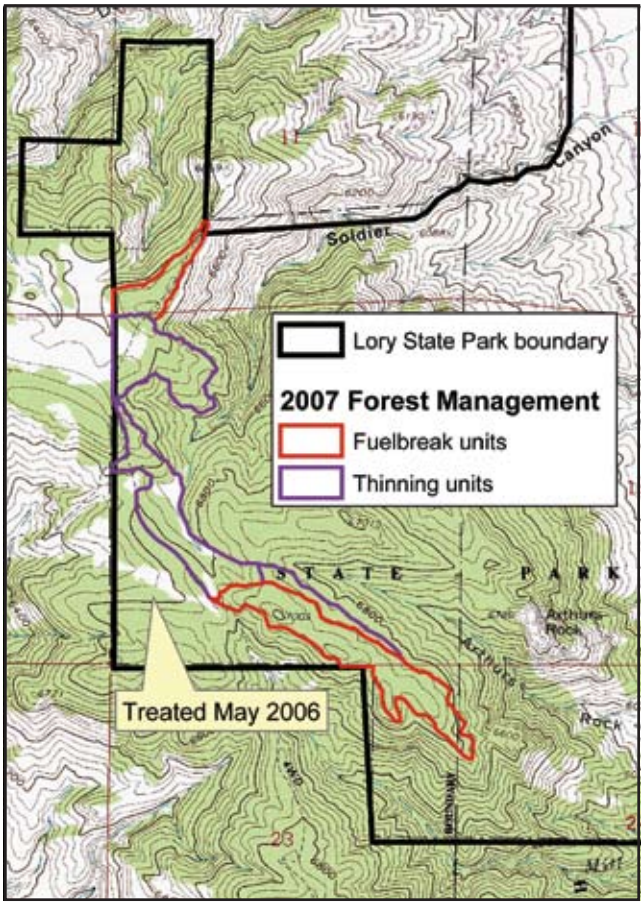
## Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnerships Projects on the Golden District

The CSFS Golden District completed several successful projects within the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership (FRFTP) area during 2006. Several hundred acres were treated for fuels mitigation on Denver Mountain Parks, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado State Land Board, Jefferson County School District, and private lands. These treatments reduced wildfire hazard, enhanced big game habitat, improved forest health, reduced insect/disease outbreak potential, and restored forest structure to more historical regimes. The projects were implemented via a combination of contracted services, seasonal field crews, local fire department personnel, and private landowners. Projects included:

- Reducing wildfire hazards and enhancing big game habitat on 198 acres of Mt. Evans State Wildlife Area in Clear Creek County near Evergreen.
- Reducing wildfire hazards and improving forest health on 140 acres at Windy Peak Outdoor Education Laboratory School near Bailey. In addition, the site provides an opportunity for school children to learn the value of forest health and fire mitigation.
- Completing more than 30 acres of fuels reduction and ponderosa pine restoration work at Cub Creek Park (a Denver Mountain Park) in a very visible area near downtown Evergreen. Many residents have commented on the positive, post-treatment aesthetics of the park.
- Working with a private landowner and using the Jefferson County fuels mitigation grant program to establish an eight-acre fuelbreak near Pine Junction.
- Providing insect and disease treatment on five acres of a degenerating lodgepole pine stand in Staunton State Park near Conifer.

## Lory State Park Fuel Mitigation

In May 2006, a fuels reduction and dwarf mistletoe removal project was completed in Lory State Park. The project, implemented by the CSFS Fort Collins District, encompassed 67 acres. The location of the project within the park is strategic; the area is bordered on two sides by private property and is on the west side – the direction of the prevailing winds in the area. Fuel reduction in this unit not only will




*Map of the treatment area in Lory State Park.*

*Some trees at Lory State Park were girdled. These trees, which eventually will die, will enhance wildlife habitat by serving as food sources and nesting sites.*

decrease the chance of a fire spreading from the private land to the park's interior, but also will make it easier for a fire in the park to be contained before it spreads to private land.

Many of the ponderosa pines in this unit were heavily infested with dwarf mistletoe; however, infestation here was not as extensive as in other areas of the park, making control of the parasite relatively simple on this particular project. To control the dwarf mistletoe parasite, small clearcuts were created where dwarf mistletoe infested all of the trees. In stands where the mistletoe infestation was not as extensive or was nonexistent, individual trees or groups of trees were removed to reduce fuels.

For wildlife habitat enhancement, between two and five large-diameter infested trees per acre were girdled – a method that kills the tree but leaves it standing – to be used as food sources and nesting sites. Most of the previously dead standing trees also were left for use by wildlife.

## CSFS Foresters Use Latest Technology to Inventory an Urban Forest

Most foresters are familiar with the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) in traditional forestry applications such as mapping forest stands, treatment areas, property boundaries, roads, or other forest features. The use of this technology in recent years has greatly improved both the accuracy and ease with which CSFS accomplishes field work. Using GIS and GPS also can greatly facilitate the management of our urban forests. Recently, the CSFS Grand Junction District completed an inventory of the City of Aspen's publicly owned street and park trees.

As with any forest, proper management of the urban forest begins with a solid inventory of what is present and what the major management concerns are. Trees in the urban forest have special values as a component of landscaping and can greatly enhance property values. Street tree inventories are seen by city foresters as essential in order to schedule maintenance, to ensure proper forest diversity, and to manage potential liability issues from "hazard" trees. Having street tree information available in a GIS format also allows viewing of public tree information on city maps in relation to other infrastructure such as buildings, pipelines, utility lines, or street signs.

CSFS commonly assists communities with street tree inventories; three previous inventories completed for Aspen in the early and mid-1990s were done with hard-copy maps and paper forms, which were then transcribed into computer-aided drafting and database programs. The latest inventory used high-resolution aerial imagery provided by the city to pinpoint tree locations. Handheld devices were used to directly enter the inventory data digitally. The data then was imported directly into a GIS mapping program, effectively eliminating paper forms and data transcription.

Each tree within the city's right-of-way, or within a public park, was examined to determine species, size, condition, and pruning or other management needs. CSFS foresters collected data for more than 7,000 city-owned trees along 27 miles of right-of-way and in 35 parks. Potential planting locations were identified and coded for the appropriate-sized tree that should be planted. A major part of this inventory also included a special hazard assessment of more than 650 large trees in order to determine a defect rating.

The new street tree inventory has created a detailed and comprehensive data layer for the city of Aspen that is easy to understand, flexible, and compatible with their existing system; the inventory also can be easily updated. It will be a great tool for Aspen's city forester in the management of the community's forest for many years to come.

*Mechanical fuel reduction often is accomplished by hydro-axe.*

## Montrose District Conducts Fuels Mitigation Project

The CSFS Montrose District is conducting a hazardous fuels mitigation project on private properties in Ouray County. Thinning and mastication – a mechanical fuel reduction technique that shreds brush and small-diameter trees – of select piñon pine, juniper, and gambel oak trees will be accomplished with a hydro-axe.

Implementation of this project, with cost-share and technical assistance provided the Montrose District, will safeguard against the spread of wildfire from Uncompahgre National Forest to private property. Although the purpose of the thinning is to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire spread along these boundaries, there are added benefits to certain wildlife species through alteration of forest structure.

Seeding of critical project areas for wildlife habitat improvement will be done with the help of donations from Safari Club International and in conjunction with the Shavano Conservation District. Technical assistance for seeding will be provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The CSFS and NRCS are assessing the interest level of local landowners to implement forest management practices to improve forest health, create defensible space, and improve wildlife habitat.

## Swayback/Jenny Gulch Timber Sale

The Swayback/Jenny Gulch Timber Sale is Phase II of the Swayback/Jenny Gulch Good Neighbor Project. The project is a joint effort of the Colorado State Forest Service, Denver Water, Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership, and USDA Forest Service. The work is being done on Denver Water and USDA Forest Service lands; the Colorado State Forest Service is managing the project through an agreement with the two organizations. The total project area is more than 400 acres; actual harvest activity currently is occurring on a portion of those acres.

The purpose of the project is to restore ponderosa pine forests to more closely resemble pre-settlement conditions, to improve forest health, and to reduce wildfire hazards. That means less dense tree stands, more open tree canopies, diverse age and species composition, and less Douglas fir.

The prescription for treatment in this area was developed by scientists and foresters who have studied the historical forest landscape at Cheesman Reservoir for more than 10 years to determine how presettlement conditions looked. Cheesman was studied because the occurrence of logging was limited during the presettlement period, and cattle grazing has not occurred for more than 100 years.

*Restored ponderosa pine forest in the Trumbull-Swayback Demonstration Forest.*

Openings were an integral part of ponderosa pine ecosystems during the presettlement era. Current research has concluded that openings distributed across the landscape in specific patterns can be a strategy to slow the spread of wildfire through tree crowns and aid suppression efforts. As part of the ongoing research of the Trumbull-Swayback Demonstration Forest, the partners are implementing concepts developed by the Fire Sciences Laboratory in Missoula, Montana, to determine the effectiveness and visual impacts of the placement of openings on the landscape, as well as test methodologies for creating them.

# Strategic Priority: Education, communication, outreach, and policy

***Address the growing public demand for information and promote informed decision making on natural resource issues by positioning CSFS as a recognized point-of-contact for Colorado on credible forestry and wildland fire information, expertise, and technical assistance.***

## Outstanding Forest Steward of the Year Teaches Kids of All Ages

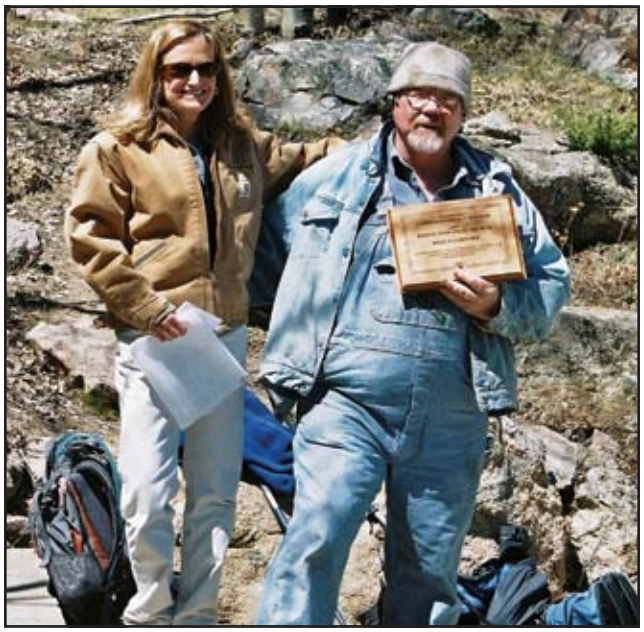
Bill Carpenter wanted to create a place where kids could come to play in the great outdoors, learn about the wonders of nature, express their creativity, and work with their hands. But when Carpenter refers to kids, age isn't a factor. He still believes that a little bit of the child lives in everyone, regardless of age.

As 70 students from Coal Creek Canyon K-8 School and parent volunteers, teachers, and the principal descended on the Carpenter Mountain Demonstration Forest for a tour of the interpretive trail on April 19, 2006, it was apparent that Carpenter is right.

With help from the Colorado State Forest Service, USDA Forest Service, American Forest Foundation, and others, Carpenter created the interpretive trail system in 2005. Since then, he has, upon request, opened the trail to fellow landowners and various groups and organizations for training and educational purposes. He also enthusiastically welcomes youth to visit – and experience – everything that nature has to offer.

Carpenter's experience on his own bit of forest began when he purchased 270 acres in 1984. From the start, he wanted to restore and maintain the health of his forested land, improve wildlife habitat and forage – and create the kind of views for which Colorado is famous. His vision has become a lifelong endeavor that earned him the 2005 Outstanding Forest Steward of the Year Award.

In a surprise ceremony at the Carpenter Mountain Demonstration Forest last April, the Colorado Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee, along with the students from Coal Creek Canyon K-8 School, honored Carpenter for his active forest management and promotion of forest stewardship.



*Jan Hackett, CSFS Forest Stewardship Program coordinator, presents Bill Carpenter with the 2005 Outstanding Forest Steward award.*

Colorado State Forester Jeff Jahnke selects the recipient each year based on recommendations by the Colorado Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee.

"Mr. Carpenter embodies the spirit of the forest stewardship program," said Jahnke. "Not only does he actively manage his forest land to achieve health, vigor, and productivity, he also has opened his property to other landowners, school children, and the general public to help them understand why it's important to manage our forests."

Surprised by the award, Carpenter thanked the committee but quickly turned to the students and asked if they had any ideas they'd like to share with him to improve the learning experience. One young student signaled to Carpenter that he had an idea or two he'd like to share and asked Carpenter to give him a call. Carpenter was delighted. To him, there's no greater measure of success than to know that he inspired a kid – no matter what age – to think creatively about what he or she had seen and experienced while on his property.

## Project Learning Tree Celebrates 30 Years of Excellent Education

The Colorado State Forest Service celebrated 30 years of an award-winning, multidisciplinary environmental education program in 2006. Project Learning Tree (PLT) is a program for educators and students from pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 and is one of the most widely used environmental education programs in the United States and abroad.

PLT is CSFS' flagship program for reaching younger audiences via workshops for K-12 educators. Colorado natural resource educators helped create PLT in 1973, and the Colorado program has been coordinated by CSFS since 1984, training 500 to 800 educators annually.

PLT began in 1976 when natural resource managers and educators from the American Forest Institute (now the American Forest Foundation) and Western Regional Environmental Education Council (now the Council of Environmental Education) formed a partnership to develop an unbiased and scientifically and educationally sound program for elementary and secondary students and their teachers.

The partners designed PLT to be shared through trained facilitators (educators, resource managers, or other interested people) who, in turn, train others in how to most effectively and efficiently use the curriculum and materials. The first workshops were held in the 13 states that made up the Western Regional Environmental Education Council.

PLT continuously evaluates and updates its curriculum to ensure that it meets educator and student needs. The program meets state and national education standards in science, social studies, language arts, math, and other subjects – and strengthens students' critical thinking, team building, and problem-solving skills. Topics range from forests, wildlife, and water to community planning, waste management, and energy.

## CAEE – Strategic Partnership for Environmental Education

Education is a conduit for fostering the public's knowledge, understanding, critical evaluation, and decision-making skills concerning Colorado's forests. Just as trees are part of a larger ecosystem, CSFS is a partner in a larger education effort – the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education (CAEE).

A comprehensive network of schools, nonprofit groups, public agencies, universities, businesses, citizen groups, and volunteer organizations provide Colorado's environmental education. These programs take place in urban, suburban, rural, and wilderness settings and incorporate a wide range of educational approaches from informal experiential learning to formal classroom lessons reaching thousands of youth and adult learners each year. Ultimately, any and all of the specific forestry and resource conservation education efforts accomplished by CSFS exist within that overall learning context. Thus, the strategic partnership between CSFS and CAEE increases the capacity of both organizations to support all forms of environmental education and increase the effectiveness and quality of education available.

# Strategic Priority: Critical agency relationships

***Enable CSFS to foster and/or maintain credibility and thrive in a changing administrative and political environment through increased emphasis on building and maintaining relationships with the Governor's Office, Colorado State University, Colorado Department of Natural Resources and other key local, state, and federal partners and by meeting the needs of those partners through quality service.***

## Making the Connection on the Salida District

How do we recruit and then retain those professionals who buy forest products and timber sales? With rising fuel costs, will transportation costs keep us from selling as much wood and thereby limit the amount of work we can accomplish toward improving forest health?

Those questions were tackled by the CSFS Salida District and the Leadville and Salida Ranger Districts of the U.S. Forest Service, San Isabel National Forest, in the winter of 2005. With the mountain pine beetle carving out large swaths of lodgepole pine "on the other side of the hill," there was a good chance many loggers would be heading north. The goal was to keep them in the Arkansas Valley, so the Salida District and two USFS Ranger Districts teamed up to host a gathering of forest landowners, harvesters, and wood processors for a daylong event in February 2006.

"Making the Connection" was the theme, and the goal was to introduce landowners to harvesters and harvesters to wood processors through the day's events:

- Public and private landowners disclosed the type of wood and volume they needed to cut for the coming year, and wood processors shared what type of product they made and the type of wood they needed.
- Attendees learned about efforts in Leadville to use biomass for heating.
- There was an introduction to lumber grading.
- The Colorado Timber Industry Association shared what was happening at the state level.

It was a solid beginning in the development of stronger working relationships among the many people who play a role in achieving healthier forests. The 2006 meeting was just a start; plans are underway for another gathering in 2007 entitled "Working Together."

## Joint Fire Science Project Advisory Team

Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) are an important means of reducing risk to communities and ecosystems of catastrophic wildfires. Enhancing collaboration and building community capacity are viewed as a means to ensure that these plans are responsive to the needs and objectives of communities located in the wildland-urban interface.

A Joint Fire Science applied research project called Enhancing Collaboration and Building Community Capacity is analyzing the lessons learned about collaborative processes among approximately ten CWPP development processes. These case studies are taking place in California, Colorado, Florida, Minnesota, and Oregon.

As part of the project, implementers from the five states were recruited to be a part of an advisory team to:

- Help the research team identify the relevant issues that are of greatest concern to local communities and managers who are developing and implementing CWPPs and monitoring results.
- Provide input in creating guidance material that will be used within the broader fire management community to address CWPP development and track their accomplishments.

• Assist in building general awareness for this Joint Fire Science project through the members' organizations and their related networks.

• Recommend how best to increase the transfer of knowledge about the key results of the project through mechanisms like professional development, education and training workshops, and outreach.

Two CSFS foresters are taking part in this project as members of the advisory team to help the scientists move research to the point of implementation; to gain new knowledge in lessons learned and ways to move community wildfire protection planning forward; and to share experiences with implementers from the other four states.

## 2005 Forest Health Report

The *2005 Report on the Health of Colorado's Forests,* released in February 2006, highlights the ecology and management of the state's aspen forests and provides an expanded insect and disease update, with a particular focus on the mountain pine beetle and spruce bark beetle outbreaks spreading throughout Colorado's central mountains. Both sections of the report underscore the need to address forest management in a proactive, rather than reactive, manner.


Many researchers and land managers attribute the size and intensity of bark beetle activity, at least partially, to the lack of age diversity in lodgepole pine and some spruce and ponderosa pine forests. This condition leaves forests extremely vulnerable to bark beetle attack.

In the absence of natural cycles of wildfire or other disturbance, forest management treatments can increase age diversity, decrease competition, and improve overall resilience among forest stands. But this action needs to occur prior to an insect epidemic in order to be most effective.

## Bark Beetle Cooperative

Bark beetles are infesting and killing trees in Colorado's northern and central forests on an unprecedented scale. More than 700,000 acres were infested by the end of 2006. Concerns about the threats posed by dead forests – wildfire risk to communities and watersheds, loss of key wildlife habitats, and impacts to local economies and infrastructure – prompted the development of the Bark Beetle Cooperative.

The Bark Beetle Cooperative was developed in response to a meeting initiated by representatives of the Colorado State Forest Service and the USDA Forest Service (USFS). The event, conducted in October 2005, was organized to determine the local-level interest in developing a coordinated response to the bark beetle outbreak. At that time, the area of concern comprised five counties in northern Colorado: Grand, Summit, Eagle, Jackson, and Routt.

The cooperative developed "A Strategy for Action and Assessment of the Bark Beetle Situation" in February 2006. This document identified values at risk, barriers to implementing a comprehensive bark beetle strategy, recent beetle activity, and assumptions for future beetle activity.

CSFS worked with local officials to identify priority areas for treatment. After the areas were mapped, CSFS, USFS, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Northwest Council of Governments met with the five counties individually to review priority areas. In late 2006, five additional counties expressed interest in participating in the cooperative: Lake, Park, Chaffee, Clear Creek, and Pitkin.

2007 promises to be an eventful year for this collaborative effort.

# Strategic Priority: Foundations for effective program delivery

***Maintain an effective foundation of administrative, planning, and development functions that provides the agency with the resources, direction, and support needed to remain focused on strategic priorities and to deliver the services and programs essential to Colorado.***

## FEMA Grant to Reduce Wildfire Risk

The Colorado State Forest Service recently was awarded a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant for Colorado Watershed Mitigation and Flood Risk Reduction. The $3.3 million will fund wildfire risk reduction projects in seven state parks along the Front Range over the next three years. The $2.5 million grant will be matched with $800,000 of value provided by Colorado State Parks and CSFS to create fuel breaks, conduct forest thinning operations, and perform prescribed burns at seven Colorado state parks:

- Cheyenne Mountain State Park
- Eldorado Canyon State Park
- Golden Gate Canyon State Park
- Lory State Park
- Mueller State Park
- Roxborough State Park
- Staunton State Park

In awarding this highly competitive grant to CSFS, FEMA recognized the potential of severe flooding and debris flows following intense wildfire, in addition to the destruction caused by wildfire alone. Projects like this reduce the overall risks to the population and structures, while also reducing the reliance on funding from actual disaster declarations. Fuels mitigation plans in place for these parks and their strategic locations within Front Range watersheds were critical to their being included in this project.

*Staunton State Park is one of the areas that will undergo wildfire risk reduction efforts through the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant.*

"A grant of this nature that takes a proactive approach to protecting the watersheds, homes, and forests of the Front Range is unprecedented in the state of Colorado," said Colorado State Parks Director Lyle Laverty. "I applaud the hard work by Colorado State Forest Service staff, as well as FEMA's progressive vision."

# Strategic Priority: Organizational environment

***Cultivate and sustain an organizational environment that promotes the development and retention of core skills needed to achieve strategic priorities and delivery of programs; that recognizes and values employees' critical role in agency accomplishment; and that allows employees to meet their full potential in providing excellent public service.***

## CSFS 2006 Training Academy

In an effort to more efficiently expend the agency's training dollars and time spent by employees in professional development, CSFS held the first week-long, agency-wide training academy in February 2006.

For five days, CSFS employees descended upon various training sites throughout Fort Collins. Subjects addressed included GIS point-of-contact introduction; contract administration; forest inventory techniques and best management practices; silvicultural lectures on various forest types by professors from the Department of Forest, Rangeland, and Watershed Stewardship in the Warner College of Natural Resources at CSU; collaboration and working with partners; beginning and advanced supervision; Excel, Word, Access, and PowerPoint proficiencies; and many more. Topics were determined by CSFS employee input and individual professional development plans. Sessions were further refined by supervisors, leadership staff, and adherence to our strategic priorities and agency needs.

In the end, 96 hours of training were offered and more than 70 employees attended, totalling 1,594 hours of training. Positive feedback and the academy's success led to the decision to make this an annual event.

## Volunteer Program Continues Excellent Service

Volunteers continue to play an integral role in the Colorado State Forest Service and have served the agency in many capacities over the last several years. Volunteer projects in 2006 ranged from large, multi-day projects coordinated through the Volunteer Forest Steward (VFS) program to small, one-time projects organized by CSFS district personnel.

The VFS program provided experiential learning, forestry-related training, and professional and personal development for volunteers in 2006. Volunteer projects encompassed more than 15 project-days – more than 2,000 volunteer hours. Each volunteer event included at least one learning component. For example, a project held in Black Forest, Colorado, in conjunction with the CSFS Woodland Park District, involved thinning young

*Volunteers burn slash piles at Ben Delatour Scout Camp.*

ponderosa pine stands and included an introduction to the Timber Stand Improvement model, wildland fire fuels reduction, habitat improvements, and chainsaw safety.

Increasing numbers of Colorado State University students are participating on CSFS volunteer events. CSU students accounted for more than 120 of the volunteer days implemented by the program in 2006. Student-related volunteer projects involve experiential learning in many aspects of forestry including tree planting, trail building, forest restoration, wildland fire, and firewood production. Volunteer events provide opportunities for students to understand the role of CSFS, learn and practice forestry-related skills, network with professionals in their chosen field, and build camaraderie with other students interested in service-learning. CSFS is continually developing strategies to engage CSU students; the volunteer program is a great tool to do just that.

The volunteer program generated more $30,000 in in-kind grant-matching dollars in 2006. Though not actual money, this in-kind match helps improve forest conditions by helping grant recipients who receive federal dollars to implement forest improvement projects. For example, the VFS program held five workdays at the Ben Delatour Scout Camp in a project involving wildland fuels mitigation in the camp's ponderosa pine forest. The volunteer hours generated at the Boy Scout camp contributed more than $6,875 in in-kind match for the camp's grant.

Additional program accomplishments included a software update for database management, newly forged partnerships with Larimer County Emergency Services and Colorado Outdoor Training Initiative, recruitment and retention of new volunteers, and successful volunteer event coordination with two CSFS districts that the VFS program has not served in recent years: La Junta and Alamosa.

# Financial Statement

## Expense

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|---|---|
| Salary, Wage & Benefits | $7,337,113 |
| Travel | $378,547 |
| Operating | $11,989,819 |
| Capital | $366,500 |
| Indirect / Utilities | $2,190,786 |
| **Total Expense** | **$22,262,766** |

## Revenue

| | |
|---|---|
| State | $(3,704,343) |
| Cash | $(5,702,228) |
| Federal | $(12,856,194) |
| **Total Revenue** | **$(22,262,766)** |
| Fire Reimbursements | $(2,825,992) |
| # of Employees | 126 |

Colorado State
FOREST
SERVICE

http://csfs.colostate.edu