

Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control



Wildfire Preparedness Plan 2013



Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control

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Introduction and Background

Colorado law; specifically Section 24-33.5-1226 (3) (a), C.R.S. requires the Director of the Division of Fire Prevention and Control to develop an annual Wildfire Preparedness Plan, in collaboration with a representative of the County Sheriffs of Colorado, a representative of the Colorado State Fire Chiefs' Association, the Director of the Office of Emergency Management and the Adjutant General.

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

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

The Wildfire Preparedness Plan shall also provide recommendations on the use of the Wildfire Preparedness Fund created in §24-33.5-1226 (4) (a), C.R.S.

Wildfire Preparedness Fund

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

Extension of the Wildfire Preparedness Fund – Governor Hickenlooper signed into law SB11-238 on June 8, 2011. The bill extends the annual transfer of \$3.25 million by the Department of Local Affairs to the Division of Fire Prevention and Control for two years beginning July 1, 2012.

Statutory Change of Authorities

On July 1, 2012, the State responsibilities for wildland fire management and prescribed fire transferred from Colorado State University to the Colorado Department of Public Safety (CDPS) under its Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC). This was a result of legislative action in the form of House Bill 12-1283. The purpose of HB12-1283 is to enhance Colorado's ability to prepare for and respond to fire and other emergencies by creating a single point of authority for fire and consolidating the State's homeland security and emergency management functions in the CDPS.

Situation

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

Wildfire Preparedness Plan – 2013

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

Due to natural fuels build-up and increased population in wildland-urban interface areas, wildfires that exceed the control efforts of local and county resources are becoming more common and more complex. The Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) is the lead state agency for wildland fire as identified in ESF 4, Colorado State Emergency Operations Plan.

Preparedness Planning Assumptions

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

Fire Season Outlook 2013

In late April and early May of every year, scientists and land managers produce coordinated outlooks for fire season across the western US to better prioritize resources. While it is too early to forecast with accuracy what the 2013 fire season will bring, experts are predicting “normal” significant wildland fire potential except for areas of above normal conditions across southern Colorado from May into July.¹

- Long-range predictors for late April through May suggest conditions near to slightly below normal for precipitation and near normal for temperatures. June and July forecasts indicate drier and warmer than normal conditions, especially during June.
- Despite some recent moisture, the southern third of Colorado remains the driest part of the Rocky Mountain Area, with persistent dryness across that part of the region.

According to the Rocky Mountain Area Seasonal Outlook as of April 19, 2013, experts suggest a repeat of a 2012 or 2002 historical fire seasons is unlikely, with most indices trending towards a more average fire season this summer. However, large fires still occur during average and even below average fire seasons. Dry pockets, especially over southern Colorado will need to be monitored closely for above average potential leading into the 2013 fire season.²

¹ National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook, National Interagency Fire Center, Predictive Services, April 1, 2013

² Rocky Mountain Area Seasonal Outlook, April 19, 2013

Wildland Fire Management Program

Wildland fire management service, support, and programs are implemented and delivered to counties and fire districts primarily through the Wildfire Operations staff, consisting of the Deputy Chief of Wildfire Operations and the Area and Regional Fire Management Officers (FMOs). This workload consists of 2 key areas: 1) day to day assistance, coordination and administration; and 2) state assistance, response and management during incidents.

General Wildland Fire Management Duties Include:

- Coordination of Wildfire Emergency Response Fund (WERF) processes and facilitate reimbursement requests from local fire agencies.
- Annual Operating Plan (AOP): coordinate with affected county, state, and federal agencies to plan, develop, complete and distribute the Annual Operating Plan.
- Cooperative Resource Rate Form (CRRF): information distribution, training, compilation, and review of documents provided by cooperators.
- Facilitate and complete County and State Wildfire agreements, including County EFF as well as numerous other agreements.
- Provide technical prescribed fire assistance to other agencies through project design, plan development, and plan implementation.
- Grant Programs: distribution of information and applications, review of applications, project tracking, and project completion processes for the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program grant.
- Provide technical assistance, advice on qualification standards and training programs. Coordinate and develop course schedules, course sponsorship by providing instructors, and tracking of completed courses.
- Serve on various committees, councils, working groups, task forces, and local working groups for wildfire coordination and planning efforts with locals.

When a wildland fire occurs anywhere in the State, Colorado law requires the DFPC provide technical assistance to local governments, and assume the management of wildfires that exceed the capacity of Counties, upon the request of the sheriff or when wildfires threaten to become state emergencies or disasters. The immediate field response to these requests for assistance is the Fire Management Officer.

An assessment was performed to determine the number of Fire Management Officer (FMO) positions that would be needed to maintain necessary roles and functions without disruption. Additional criteria that were considered included: geographic size, accessibility, and travel; wildland urban interface (WUI) areas and potential incident complexity; typical wildfire fuels, fire behavior, fire occurrence, and incident duration; and the need to be located and integrated within the local communities.

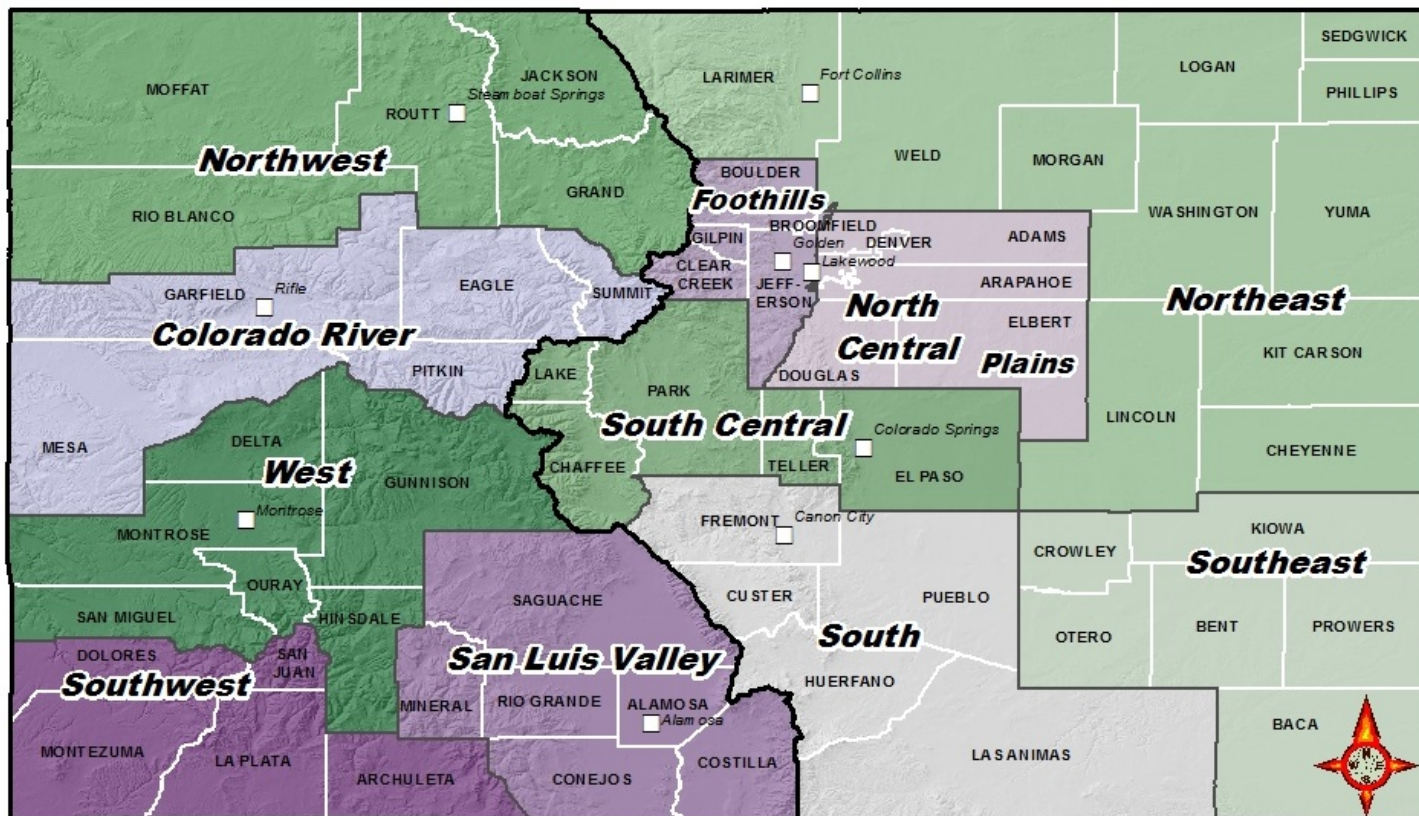
The assessment concluded that the necessary field staff to maintain continuity of operations would be 2 Area FMO positions serving in supervisory and backfill roles, and 10 Regional FMO positions assigned within the Colorado All-Hazard Regions.

Wildfire Preparedness Plan – 2013

The DFPC Fire Management Zones

The DFPC Fire Management Zones are based on the State All-Hazard Regions, with certain exceptions. An analysis was conducted to determine the best distribution of FMO's to effectively provide rapid response to incidents in support of counties, sheriffs and local fire chiefs; and perform day to day duties, coordination and administration. This analysis resulted in development of the following Fire Management Zones.

Division of Fire Prevention and Control Fire Management Zones



2013 Wildland Fire Management Plan

The Division currently has 9 Regional FMO's to cover the State's 9 All-Hazard Regions, with 2 Area FMO positions serving in supervisory and backfill role. DFPC is currently in the process of adding an FMO to the Southwest Region and is evaluating how to best address the workload and the complexity of fires in the North Central Region.

It is anticipated that during active fire seasons, additional experienced and trained state personnel will be needed for Fire Duty Officer and initial response roles. This need was addressed during the 2nd half of the 2012 fire season by maintaining an MOU with CSFS that provided for the response of a qualified "Line Officer" to fires when needed. The DFPC expects this MOU to be extended through June 30, 2013.

Fire Aviation Program

For the past several years, the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) annually procured Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) aircraft on an "Invitation for Bid to Provide Single Engine Air Tanker" contract. Per this contract, SEATs were available to the State of Colorado on an "Exclusive-Use" basis during the wildland fire season. Under the Exclusive Use contract the SEATs could not leave the State for Interagency use without permission of the contracting authority (CSFS).



For the 2012 fire season, due to contracting issues, the CSFS opted not to go with an Exclusive Use contract, but rather was part of a regional interagency joint use agreement for SEAT's, which were based out of the State of Colorado. To ensure that Colorado had more say in the operational control of the SEAT's, CSFS (and later, DFPC) provided virtually all of the support for their operation, including SEAT bases and SEAT Managers. Furthermore, because of the extraordinary wildland fire season and aggressive representation by CSFS (prior to July 1st) and DFPC personnel after July 1st to the Rocky Mountain Coordinating Group (RMCG), we were able to maintain SEAT availability in the State of Colorado throughout the fire season.

2012 SEAT Operational Statistics

Requesting Agency	# Total Incidents	# Total Loads	# Total Flight Time (hrs)	# Total Gallons Delivered	%
County/State	15	121	145.48	89,034	24.30
BLM	45	290	241.76	209,127	40.38
USFS	19	260	168.14	192,111	28.08
Other States	3	13	10.08	9,834	1.68
BIA	13	58	28.33	42,057	4.73
NPS	1	5	4.95	3,547	0.83
Total	96	747	598.74	545,710	100.00

Off-Season Operations

When the CSFS had an Exclusive Use contract, during the off-season, one SEAT was available as a "Call-When-Needed" (CWN) resource, which in reality meant that a SEAT was housed in a hanger in the State, but the pilot was on-call at their home base in Idaho. If the CWN contract was activated for a fire, the pilot would need to travel to Colorado before the SEAT was ready for a mission, and the minimum contract period was 10 days.

In the absence of an Exclusive Use contract in 2012, once the SEATs were released from their federal contracts on September 30th, they were free to return to their home base in Idaho. However, due to the ongoing

potential of a wildland fire that could threaten lives and/or property, the DFPC maintained one SEAT available in the State on a weekly contract rate. On November 13th, after consultation with stakeholders, the DFPC released the remaining SEAT to return to its home base.

2013 Fire Aviation Plan

For the 2013 fire season, DFPC has entered into an exclusive use contract for 2 SEATs for 120 days each. This contract is estimated at \$1.2 million; however, the actual number of contract days and flight hours will affect the final amount.

DFPC continues to evaluate options towards the goal of making the State's fire aviation program more diverse, effective and efficient include:

- Support additional training to ensure further integration and consistent competency of CONG helicopters and streamline the process of mobilizing this resource.
- Utilizing CSP fixed wing and other available aircraft for detection activities.
- Increased training of local fire departments and sheriffs in the use of aircraft for initial attack on fires.
- Consider call-when-needed (CWN) contract for large air tankers (LATs).
- Consider call-when-needed (CWN) contract for SEATs for initial attack on fires in the eastern plains.

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

State Engine Program

The State Engine Program includes personnel, upgrades, and the operating expense of the permanent, seasonal, and cooperator staffed engines. DFPC currently maintains 12 Type 6 Engines and 4 Type 4 Engines, which have been traditionally deployed as follows:

- 4 state permanent staffed engines
- 3 state seasonal staffed engines
- 6 state engines with cooperator (call-when-needed) staffing
- 3 loaner engines

2013 State Engine Plan

For 2013, the amount of money available for the State Engine Program is not sufficient to maintain it at the same level that it could be in previous years.

In recognition that this program is important to filling gaps that exist in local wildland fire resources, DFPC is looking for innovative and cost-effective means to continue it. DFPC is currently soliciting interest from local fire departments and county sheriffs that in jointly staffing state engines and negotiating agreements with those that have expressed interest.

Wildfire Preparedness Plan – 2013



Example of DFPC Type 6 Engine



Example of DFPC Type 4 Engine

The 2013 plan for state engines will be based on wildfire risk and need as well as available funding, and may include any number of potential arrangements, including:

- Strategically Located State Engines (with Permanent, Seasonal, and/or Interagency staffing)
- Strategically Located Super Modules (Type 4 and Type 6)

To the degree practicable and possible, State engines will:

- be incorporated into local and regional response plans and will honor mutual aid periods; and
- be relocated around the state based on need, to fill gaps in coverage or to address wildfire potential and wildfire activity (severity assignments).

The following is also included in the 2013 State Engine Plan:

- Fire Equipment Shop support for equipment maintenance and repair
- 2 lowboy transport trailers for maintenance

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

Colorado Department of Corrections: State Wildland Inmate Fire Team

Following the 2000 Fire Season, Colorado Corrections Industries (CCi) began forming a wildland fire team to provide hand crew support and assistance on wildland fires within Colorado. CCi operates the four State Wildland Inmate Fire Team (SWIFT) crews, housed at various correctional facilities in Colorado. Currently, the base locations are at the Four Mile Correctional Center in Canon City, the Rifle Correctional Center in Rifle and the Buena Vista Correctional Center in Buena Vista, Colorado. In 2012, CCi added a fourth crew to the program, based out of Rifle Correctional.

In 2012, SWIFT crews have responded to 31 separate wildfire incidents in Colorado, working a total of 184 days on fire assignments.

Wildfire Preparedness Plan – 2013

2013 SWIFT Plan

In 2013, DFPC will continue to support the four State Wildland Inmate Fire Team (SWIFT) crews operated by CCI; providing training, logistical and/or overhead support that may be needed to ensure operational readiness and hazardous fuel reduction projects.



Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP) Engine Program

While not a required component of the Wildfire Preparedness Plan, this program is responsible for building and maintaining a fleet of Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP) engines that are placed with local jurisdictions across the State of Colorado.

Currently, there are 118 FEPP engines under agreements across the state and the Fire Equipment Shop builds an average of 10 such engines each year to maintain and expand the fleet.



Summary of 2013 Wildfire Preparedness Plan

Following is a summary of the activities that will be implemented to address the required components of the annual Wildfire Preparedness Plan

- (1) The amount of aerial firefighting resources necessary for the state of Colorado at times of high and low wildfire risk.
 - DFPC will develop and manage a fire aviation program which will include an Exclusive Use Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) Contract while evaluating options to diversify the State's Fire Aviation Program in the interest of increased effectiveness and efficiency.
 - DFPC will coordinate Colorado fire aviation resources with interagency partners while considering current wildfire risk.

Wildfire Preparedness Plan – 2013

- (2) The availability of appropriate aerial firefighting equipment and personnel at times of high fire risk to respond to a wildfire.
- DFPC will coordinate and execute cooperative wildfire management agreements with appropriate local, state, county and federal jurisdictions.
 - DFPC will facilitate the development of Annual Operating Plans with each County and jurisdictions within the counties.
- (3) The availability of state wildfire engines and staffing of the engines at different levels of wildfire risk.
- DFPC will maintain a staffed wildland engines program year round based on wildfire risk and need, and may include any number of potential staffing arrangements.
 - DFPC will manage up to 140 wildland engines on loan to local fire departments.
- (4) The availability of state inmate wildfire hand crews at different levels of wildfire risk.
- DFPC will continue to support the four State Wildland Inmate Fire Team (SWIFT) crews operated by CCI; providing training, logistical and/or overhead support that may be needed to ensure operational readiness and hazardous fuel reduction projects.
- (5) A process for ordering and dispatching aerial firefighting equipment and personnel that is consistent with, and supportive of, the statewide mobilization plan prepared pursuant to Section 24-33.5-705.4, C.R.S.

DFPC will provide the technical assistance and program management that identifies local, county, and state resources; their qualification to national standards; and their listing in interagency zone dispatch centers and in the Colorado Statewide Resource Mobilization System.

Preparedness means having the appropriate resources available to respond when needed. For that to successfully occur, a framework of agreements, plans, processes, lists, standards, and relationships must exist, be clearly understood, and be supported. Since 2006, the Colorado Wildfire Preparedness Fund has provided that support.

2013 Preparedness Fund Budget

The 2013 Preparedness Fund Budget estimate reflects funding specifically authorized and appropriated from §24-33.5-1226 (4) (a), C.R.S. It is based on the second half of state Fiscal Year 2012/13 that runs through June 30, 2013 and the first half of FY 2013/14 which runs through December 31, 2013. The 2013 Calendar Year Budget is presented since work planning within the wildfire community typically follows a calendar year. Other funding sources available to support wildfire protection may align with the State Fiscal Year (July 1 through June 31), Local Government Fiscal Year (Calendar Year) or the Federal Fiscal Year (October 1 through September 30).

Wildfire Preparedness Plan – 2013

Division of Fire Prevention & Control 2013 Wildfire Preparedness Budget Estimate

Expense Category	Resource	Cost (Expense)	Running Total
Beginning Fund Balance			\$4,267,088
<u>Fire Aviation Program</u>	Salaries and Operating	\$594,329	
	2 SEATS (Exclusive Use)	\$1,200,000	
	CONG Contingency	\$150,000	
	Detection Flights	\$6,500	
	Subtotal	\$1,950,829	\$2,316,259
<u>Fire Management</u> 2 Area, 9 Regional FMOs	FMO Salaries, Benefits & Operating	\$1,005,634	
	Wildland Fire Section Management	\$688,993	
	Subtotal	\$1,694,627	\$621,632
<u>State Engine Program</u> 2 Staffed Engines, 6 Firefighters (1)	Salaries, Benefits & Operating	\$200,963	
	Severity Assignments	\$0	
	Subtotal	\$200,963	\$420,669
<u>Vehicle Maintenance</u> <u>Shop</u>	Salaries, Benefits & Operating	\$82,260	
	Vehicle Maintenance & Repairs	\$296,409	
	Subtotal	\$378,669	\$42,000
<u>SWIFT Crew Support</u>	Hand Crew Contingency		
		\$42,000	0
TOTALS		\$4,267,088	0

Notes:

(1) Other funding sources may be used to increase the number of state staffed engines.

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

- (a) purchasing, acquiring, leasing, or contracting for the provision of firefighting aircraft, engines and other vehicles, facilities, equipment and supplies for firefighting and other emergencies; and
- (b) the retrofitting, staffing, maintenance, operation, and support of firefighting aircraft, engines and other vehicles.

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

Wildfire Preparedness Plan – 2013

Concurrence

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

For the County Sheriffs of Colorado

JOSEPH K. PELLE
Printed Name


Signature

For the Colorado State Fire Chiefs'

Terrod Van Landingham
Printed Name


Signature

For the Director of the Office of Emergency Management

David K. Hard
Printed Name


Signature

For the Adjutant General

Peter Byrne, Brig Gen, DJS
Printed Name


Signature