

Forest Health Advisory Council (FHAC) Preliminary Agreements

1. As a result of changes in fire frequency, change in social values, recent draught and disease, and lack of active management, Colorado's forests are unhealthy. Precious human values such as water and wildlife resources, recreation opportunities, and forested communities around the State are in jeopardy due to high-severity fire, insect infestations, and other transitional disturbances.
2. Colorado's forests are at high risk of immediate and catastrophic fire. Loss of human life and community structures and infrastructure are the top concerns, and for good reason; however, rural, suburban, and urban communities and residents will see significant adverse impacts to the following values should there be a high-severity fire in the State:
 - Watershed health
 - Water quality (municipal, industrial, and environmental)
 - Recreation opportunities and economy
 - Stream level stability (post-fire flooding)
 - Timber production and markets
 - Irrigated agriculture
 - Wildlife habitat
 - Statewide power grid reliability
 - Homeowner's insurance premiums
 - State and federal financial resources
 - Quality of life and Colorado values
 - Economic resiliency
3. Recreational opportunities are dependent on healthy forests. Colorado's forests accommodate multiple use and bring in roughly \$28 billion annually. As these forests transition to a healthy ecosystem, there may be some tension between recreation and forest health; however, these two critical values can and should be complementary and not in competition with one another.
4. Current funding for forest health action is not adequate to treat Colorado's forests at a pace and scale that will effectively manage and mitigate the negative effects of high-severity wildfire. More money is needed from the local, State, and federal levels for active and proactive management. While the current levels of funding are not sufficient, opportunities exist to leverage these available sources and create shared solutions through collaborative efforts, partnerships, and private industry at all levels of government. Additionally, current resources can be allocated in a more effective and efficient way.
5. The USFS owns and manages roughly 10,179,000 forested acres within Colorado. The USFS processes and procedures for developing and implementing treatments (any activity that achieves a management goal) makes their ability to address forest health issues difficult and expensive. Collaboration and institutional support are paramount to help USFS staff be as effective as possible.
6. More effort is needed to educate and engage the public and elected officials about forest health and modern methods of forest health management. Outreach should include the importance of forest treatments of all kinds, the role of fire in the ecosystem, modern silviculture practices, best management practices, and the positive relationship between management activities and improved forest health.

7. Prescribed fire is an important tool that works in conjunction with other tools to actively manage Colorado's forests. Actively managing the forests using a combination of tools will reduce the effects of wildfire. Active management of our forests with prescribed fire is especially important in Colorado's fire-prone landscapes where years of unnatural fuel accumulation have created a situation ripe for catastrophic wildfire.
8. Prescribed and natural fire are important tools that need to be utilized to achieve good forest health. In some, but not all cases, fire may be the most cost-effective tool available, but it is not the only tool that is needed to address forest health. Active management of our forests with a combination of tools is typically the most effective management approach. Important tools to achieve and maintain a healthy forest that must also be available to use in conjunction with or independently of fire include:
 - Education and outreach
 - Invasive species management
 - Timber harvesting
 - Insect management
 - Stewardship contracts
 - Grazing
 - Prescribed fire
9. Planning, implementation, assessment, and maintenance of all types of forest treatments benefit from data and research. While Colorado has a great resource in the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI) at Colorado State University (CSU) and the Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) through the US Forest Service, CFRI and RMRS lack the capacity to meet all of our research needs. Additional support and capacity for research is critical.
10. Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) assessments should look at hydrologic impacts beyond National Forest boundaries to pour points that will be impacted by post-fire flooding.