



Legislative Council Staff

Nonpartisan Services for Colorado's Legislature

Bill 1

FISCAL NOTE

Drafting Number: LLS 19-0221
Prime Sponsors:

Date: September 27, 2018
Bill Status: Wildfire Matters Review
Committee Bill Request
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Bill Topic: WILDLAND FIRE AIRSPACE PATROL SYSTEM

**Summary of
Fiscal Impact:**

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> State Revenue | <input type="checkbox"/> TABOR Refund |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State Expenditure | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> State Transfer | <input type="checkbox"/> Statutory Public Entity |

Subject to available appropriations, this bill directs the Center of Excellence to study and, if feasible, implement a system to patrol the airspace above a wildland fire. It increases state expenditures in FY 2019-20 and, depending on the results of the study, may increase expenditures on an ongoing basis in future years.

**Appropriation
Summary:**

For FY 2019-20, the bill requires a General Fund appropriation of \$350,000 to the Department of Public Safety.

**Fiscal Note
Status:**

The fiscal note reflects the bill draft requested by the Wildfire Matters Review Committee.

Table 1
State Fiscal Impacts Under Bill 1

		FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21
Revenue		-	-
Expenditure	General Fund	\$350,000	-
Transfer		-	-
TABOR Refund		-	-

Summary of Legislation

Subject to available appropriations, this bill directs the Center of Excellence (COE) to study and, if feasible, implement a system to patrol the airspace above a wildland fire. The patrol system must be capable of determining whether the airspace above wildland fires is clear of obstacles, including private unmanned aircraft systems, that may interfere with aerial firefighting.

Background

The COE was created in Senate Bill 14-164 in the Division of Fire Prevention and Control in the Department of Public Safety. Its mission is to protect the citizens, land, and resources in Colorado by researching, testing, and evaluating existing and new technologies that support sustainable, effective, and efficient aerial firefighting techniques. According to the COE, there were five incidents of unmanned aerial systems (drones) delaying or disrupting aerial fire suppression activities for wildland fires in 2018. Detection of drones is currently limited to visual observation, which poses challenges due to the size of drones and conditions during a wildland fire. Many drones emit radio frequencies, which are known frequencies that can be detected beyond the line of sight. Radar technology, which can be deployed from small units on the ground, such as in a vehicle, may also be viable for determining the location of smaller drones.

As of this writing, the fiscal note does not assume any impacts to local governments. To the extent that the Department of Public Safety determines that it is feasible to expand the scope of the project and is provided additional funding, any intergovernmental agreements will be determined at that time.

State Expenditures

For FY 2019-20, the bill increases costs by \$350,000 General Fund to implement a study of a system to patrol the airspace above wildland fires. Costs assume that two systems will be purchased, tested, and evaluated: one radio frequency system and one radar system. The cost for both systems, including tracking hardware, is \$330,000. Evaluation costs are assumed to be \$20,000, which will be conducted by a vendor, with staff support from the COE. Depending on the outcome of the study and subject to available appropriations, the bill may also increase costs in future years to implement a full system. The fiscal note assumes that any outyear costs will be addressed through the annual budget process following completion of the study.

Effective Date

The bill takes effect August 2, 2019, if the General Assembly adjourns on May 3, 2019, as scheduled, and no referendum petition is filed.

State Appropriations

For FY 2019-20, the bill requires an appropriation of \$350,000 General Fund to the Department of Public Safety.

State and Local Government Contacts

Public Safety

