



SUMMARY REPORT

of Interim Committee Activities

November 2023

Wildfire Matters Review Committee

Committee Members: Representative Elizabeth Velasco, Chair, Senator Lisa Cutter, Vice Chair
Senators Joann Ginal, Sonya Jaquez Lewis, Cleave Simpson, Perry Will
Representatives Ruby Dickson, Mike Lynch, Marc Snyder, Ron Weinberg

Committee Charge

Pursuant to Section 2-3-1602, C.R.S., the Wildfire Matters Review Committee (committee) is charged with reviewing and proposing legislation or other policy changes related to wildfire prevention, mitigation, and related matters, including public safety and forest health issues. Senate Bill 13-082 created the committee and Senate Bill 18-039 extended the repeal date of the committee to September 1, 2025. Senate Bill 21-012 added a requirement for the committee to review policy changes to maximize the utilization of wildland fire services through the inmate disaster relief program.

Calendar of Events

July 18, 2023

- Department of Public Safety Fire Prevention and Control presentation
- Northern Colorado Fireshed Collaboration presentation
- Department of Natural Resources presentation
- Colorado State Forest Service presentation
- Colorado Counties, Inc. presentation
- Public testimony
- Committee discussion

August 29, 2023

- University Corporation for Atmospheric Research presentation
- Colorado Rural Electric Association presentation
- Colorado Association of Municipal Utilities presentation

- Department of Public Health and Environment & Department of Public Safety presentation
- Colorado Forest Health Council presentation
- Committee discussion
- Center for Independence presentation
- Center for People with Disabilities presentation
- Special District Association presentation
- American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals presentation
- Public testimony

September 6, 2023

- CDOT Hanging Lake tunnel tour
- Lake Christine fire and El Jebel Mobile Home Park tour
- Community engagement at Glenwood Springs library



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September 7, 2023

- EcoFlight over Lake Christine and Grizzly Creek burn scars
- Center of Excellence tour

November 1, 2023

- Discussion of bill drafts
- Public testimony
- Final action on bill draft requests

September 19, 2023

- Colorado Division of Insurance presentation
- Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety presentation
- Colorado State Forest Service update on Senate Bill 22-007
- Colorado State Fire Chiefs presentation
- Public testimony
- Draft bill requests

Recommended Legislation

As a result of committee discussion and deliberation, the committee recommends the following bills for consideration in the 2024 legislative session.

Bill A – Study Biochar in Wildfire Mitigation Efforts

The bill directs Colorado State University to study the use of biochar in wildfire mitigation efforts. Biochar is a type of charcoal produced by burning organic material in a form that resists decay in order to sequester its carbon content. The study must evaluate beneficial uses for biochar, its impacts on forest health, and best practices for creating it.

Bill B – Emergency Management Plan Individuals with Animals

Under current law, local emergency management agencies must maintain an emergency management plan with provisions for the preparation, prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery from emergencies and disasters. The bill encourages emergency management agencies to address the needs of individuals with animals when amending or adopting emergency management plans.

Bill C – Assist Rural Community Wildfire-related Grant Application

The bill requires that the Rural Opportunity Office in the Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) provide technical assistance to rural communities to identify and apply for state and federal grants for wildfire mitigation, prevention, response, or risk-management efforts. OEDIT must also maintain a list of government grant programs on its



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website. Beginning July 1, 2025, OEDIT must make a biennial report to the General Assembly summarizing its work to assist rural communities with grant identification and application

Bill D – Local Government Disaster-related Programs

The bill creates two programs to support local governments in wildfire risk mitigation:

- First, the bill directs the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to create a slash removal pilot program supporting county efforts to remove slash, which is the residue created by wildfire risk mitigation efforts. The department, in consultation with counties that already have slash removal programs, must select counties to participate in the pilot program and provide knowledge and resources to facilitate slash removal.
- Second, the bill directs the Department of Public Safety (CDPS) to provide guidance to local governments to facilitate debris removal following a disaster. This includes negotiating with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, developing standard forms and procedures, and ensuring that local programs are limited to residential, rather than commercial, debris removal. The department must publish this guidance on its website and update it as necessary.

Bill E – Extend Outreach Campaigns Wildfire Risk Mitigation

The bill requires the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) to continue its enhanced wildfire awareness outreach campaign through FY 2027-28, as well as other outreach efforts to increase awareness of wildfire risk mitigation by residents in the wildland-urban interface. The bill extends the requirement that the state forester report annually on outreach efforts to the General Assembly. Finally, the bill requires that the General Assembly appropriate \$300,000 annually to the Healthy Forests and Vibrant Communities Fund through FY 2027-08 for ongoing wildfire awareness campaigns and outreach efforts. For FY 2024-25, the bill includes the first annual appropriation of \$300,000 from the General Fund to the fund.