
Colorado Forest Health Council 2023 Annual Report



August 2023

Letter from Council Chair

As the Executive Director of the Department of Natural Resources and Chair of the Colorado Forest Health Council, I am pleased to present the Council's 2023 Annual Report to the Governor pursuant to Colorado Revised Statute § 23-31-316. This is the second Annual Report following the establishment of the new Council through SB21-237.

I thank all of the Council members for their thoughtful discussions on forest management challenges and solutions in Colorado this year. I also want to thank the experts and stakeholders who shared their knowledge and perspectives with the Council.

In this report, the Colorado Forest Health Council recommends several specific actions for improving forest health and wildfire mitigation. Legislative recommendations will be presented to the General Assembly through the Wildfire Matters Review Committee, and administrative recommendations are directed towards agency leadership of the Department of Natural Resources, Colorado State Forest Service, and the Division of Fire Prevention and Control.

The Colorado Forest Health Council thanks Governor Polis for his leadership on forest management issues. I also want to thank our State Forester Matt McCombs for his leadership and commitment to innovation. Thank you to the people of Colorado for their ongoing attention to our forests, and I look forward to working with Council members to develop further recommendations in 2024.

Truly,



Dan Gibbs
Executive Director
Colorado Department of Natural Resources

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Voting Commission Members

Agency Members

Dan Gibbs, Council Chair
Executive Director, Colorado
Department of Natural Resources

Matt McCombs, State Forester, Director
of the Colorado State Forest Service

Mike Morgan, Director, Division of Fire
Prevention and Control

Regional Forester Beum or Deputy
Regional Forester Buchanan, U.S.
Forest Service Region 2

John Ring, Forestry Program Lead, U.S.
Bureau of Land Management

Frank Falzone or another NRCS
designee

Governor-appointed Members of the Colorado General Assembly

Lisa Cutter, Member of the Colorado
Senate from the 20th District

Mike Lynch, Member of the Colorado
House of Representatives from the 65th
District

Governor-appointed Members

Samantha Albert, Deputy Director,
Outdoor Recreation Industry Office, of
Denver, Colorado, to serve as an
employee of the Colorado Office of
Economic Development with a

leadership role and expertise in
outdoor recreation;

Christy Belton, Rancher, of Steamboat
Springs, Colorado, to serve as an
individual who owns a ranch and has
grazing rights on public lands;

Ethan Bucholz, Forest Monitoring
Program Manager, Colorado State Forest
Service, of Fort Collins, Colorado, to
serve as a forest scientist or an
individual who is employed in a forest
research position and has climate
science experience;

Christina Burri, Watershed Scientist,
Denver Water, of Drake, Colorado, to
serve as an individual who is employed
by a water supplier, including a
municipal drinking water supplier and
an irrigation water supplier, east of the
continental divide;

Clyde Church, La Plata County
Commissioner, of Durango, Colorado, to
serve as a county commissioner west of
the continental divide;

Patricia Dorsey, Director of
Conservation Operations, Mountain
West, National Wild Turkey Federation,
of Bayfield, Colorado, to serve as an
individual employed by or associated
with a wildlife organization;

Scott Jones, Vice President, Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition, of Livermore, Colorado, to serve as an individual employed by or associated with an organization that advocates for motorized recreation;

Abe Laydon, Douglas County Commissioner, of Lone Tree, Colorado; to serve as a county commissioner east of the continental divide;

Paige Lewis, Deputy State Director and Director of Conservation Programs for The Nature Conservancy in Colorado, of Boulder, Colorado, to serve as an individual employed by or associated with a conservation organization;

Katie McGrath Novak, Colorado Forest Collaboratives Network Coordinator, of Longmont, Colorado, to serve as an individual employed or associated with a forest collaborative organization;

Veronica Medina, Archuleta County Commissioner, of Pagosa Springs, Colorado, to serve as a county commissioner west of the continental divide;

Mark Morgan, Owner, Morgan Timber Products, of Fort Collins, Colorado, to serve as an individual employed by or associated with the timber industry;

Amy Moyer, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Colorado River District, of Glenwood Springs, Colorado, to serve as an individual employed by a water supplier, including a municipal drinking water supplier and an irrigation water supplier, west of the continental divide;

Jody Shaddock-McNally, Larimer County Commissioner, of Loveland, Colorado, to serve as a county commissioner east of the continental divide;

Julie Stencel, Assistant General Counsel, Xcel Energy, Denver, Colorado, to serve as an individual employed by a public utility that owns or operates transmission facilities;

Carole Walker, Executive Director, Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association, of Denver, Colorado, to serve as an individual employed by or associated with the insurance industry;

Selwyn Whiteskunk, Vice Chair, Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Council, of Towaoc, Colorado, to serve as an enrolled member of a tribe that has a reservation in Colorado;

Brett Wolk, Assistant Director, Colorado Forest Restoration Institute, of Fort Collins, Colorado, to serve as an individual employed by a research institution and who has forest policy expertise

Colorado Forest Health Council Administration

Angela Boag, Assistant Director for Climate and Forest Health
Colorado Department of Natural Resources
Council Administrator

Courtney Young, Wildfire Mitigation Program Facilitator
Colorado Department of Natural Resources
Minutes and Committee Facilitator

James Lucero, Associate Director, Policy and Legislative Affairs
Colorado State Forest Service
Minutes, Committee Facilitator, and Travel Reimbursement

Meetings: The Colorado Forest Health Council (CFHC) held four quarterly meetings in 2022-23, in addition to a supplementary meeting to approve this report, and dozens of Committee meetings. Two quarterly meetings per year are entirely virtual, while the other two are hybrid in-person/virtual meetings. The Colorado State Forest Service covers travel costs for Council members attending in-person meetings.

Website: <https://dnr.colorado.gov/divisions/forestry/colorado-forest-health-council>

Introduction

Forests cover over 24 million acres of Colorado, and provide some of our State's most critical resources. Recreation, wildlife habitat, clean water, and safe and prosperous communities all depend on healthy forests. The Colorado Forest Health Council was established following SB21-237, which was signed by the Governor on June 22, 2021. The Council was re-established within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) from the preceding Forest Health Advisory Council, which made recommendations to the State Forester.

The Colorado Forest Health Council provides (CFHC) a collaborative forum to advise the governor and general assembly on a broad range of issues, opportunities, and threats with regard to Colorado's forests. The Council's 26 members represent diverse stakeholders and agencies working in forest management across Colorado.

The full Council discussed the following over their five full-council meetings from October to August 2022/23:

- Reviewed statutory duties and bylaws, and updated bylaws to clarify Committee procedures.
- Identified top 2022-23 Council priorities for education, discussion and making recommendations: Landscape-scale state priorities; forest management techniques to support water resources; and maximizing success of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act federal program implementation and coordination.
- Staffing challenges and strategies for the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) and the U.S. Forest Service.
 - U.S. Forest Service funding for Good Neighbor Authority projects run by the Colorado State Forest Service.
- Updates and input from members of the Colorado Forest Collaboratives Network and Katie McGrath Novak, Council member and Network Coordinator.
- Several CFHC members formed a joint Prescribed Fire Subcommittee with members of the Colorado Fire Commission, which developed a Draft Prescribed Fire Strategy for consideration by the Colorado Fire Commission.
- Presentation from CSFS on the Colorado Forest Atlas and Wildfire Risk Reduction Planner.
- Program and funding updates, including federal funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding; CSFS program updates; and DNR Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program and Wildfire Ready Watersheds updates.
- Legislative updates from DNR staff and regular roundtable updates from all Council members.
- Received training from state attorneys on Conflicts of Interest and began developing written guidance for Council members.

Legislative Intent

Senate Bill SB21-237, signed into law by Governor Polis on June 22, 2021, established that “[the] mission of the council is to improve forest health in

Colorado through an integrated, science-based, statewide approach focused on collaboration among federal, state, and local governments, and private and nonprofit partners, to mitigate wildfire, restore ecological health, safeguard communities and water supplies, mitigate and adapt to climate change, support local economies, and protect recreational settings, as appropriate, across all jurisdictional boundaries.”

The bill and resulting statute also established the powers and duties of the Council, which calls for the Council to engage in at least the following activities (C.R.S. 23-31-316):

- (I) Making recommendations for forest health and wildfire mitigation capacity building and funding;
- (II) Development of, and recommendations for, attaining a thirty-year vision for forest health in Colorado, including developing goals and both annual and multi-year recommendations for actions to improve forest health and reduce fire risk through increased funding and capacity building;
- (III) Landscape-scale planning to identify state-level priorities for forest restoration, wildfire risk reduction, and related management; key barriers inhibiting the achievement of those priorities; and solutions to overcome those barriers;
- (IV) Monitoring trends related to forest ecosystem health, including those related to climate adaptation, and advising on opportunities for state-level action;
- (V) Monitoring and identifying opportunities to support and promote synergy across forest-based collaboratives in the state, including coordinating state funding sources and sharing best practices;
- (VI) Identification of strategies for building sustained capacity to conduct forest restoration and wildfire mitigation work at scale through collaboration across multiple agencies, organizations, and jurisdictions; public-private partnerships; innovative public and private funding vehicles; shared stewardship; and other solutions, with emphasis on leveraging and maximizing the impact and reach of state funding;
- (VII) Identification of workforce development challenges and opportunities, as well as potential regional and statewide economic benefits, associated with a significant increase in wildfire mitigation and forest restoration activities;

(VIII) Development and support of solutions to manage and utilize woody material produced by mitigation work, including consideration of climate change and ecological impacts;

(IX) Development of legislative and regulatory recommendations for policies that could support wildfire mitigation and forest restoration goals; and

(X) Providing technical expertise and recommendations to inform the general assembly, the executive branch, and federal and local agencies on forest health and wildfire mitigation issues.

At a minimum, the Council is statutorily required to annually brief the Wildfire Matters Review Committee (legislative interim committee) and submit an annual report to the Governor. The Council's statutory authorization will be reviewed prior to potential sunset and repeal on September 1, 2026.

Council Committees

1. Legislative Committee

Committee Chair: Larimer County Commissioner Jody Shaddock-McNally

The Legislative Committee considered forest health challenges from across the state, hearing from stakeholders with diverse backgrounds and expertise. The Committee presented legislative and administrative recommendations to the Forest Health Council, which were ultimately voted on and presented to relevant decision makers.

2023 Legislative Session

- In advance of the 2023 Legislative Session and during the Session, Committee members provided feedback on proposed bill amendments.
- Committee Chair Jody Shaddock-McNally and State Forester Matt McCombs testified in support of SB23-005 (Forestry And Wildfire Mitigation Workforce bill).
- Committee Chair Jody Shaddock-McNally testified in support of HB23-1060 (Updates To State Forest Service Tree Nursery bill)

Topics presented to, or discussed by, the Legislative Committee include:

June 30, 2023

Presenters: Derek Lowstuter, CSU Extension and Hally Strevey, Coalition for the Poudre River

Topic: Biochar and seed deficit

Derek Lowstuter - Biochar

- Support the bipartisan Biochar Research Network Act of 2023 (advocate for research sites in CO)
- Support State and Federal financial assistance for farmers and ranchers to apply biochar to soils (e.g. STAR Soil Health Program, EQIP)
- Support production and application of biochar on State lands
 - State trust lands - biochar carbon credits can raise revenue for public education
- Support county/regional flame-cap kiln “libraries” for responsible slash disposal on private lands
- Support public-facing biochar demonstrations, such as the installation of a pyrolysis energy system at CSU Spur Campus/National Western Complex

Hally Strevey - Seed deficit

- Discussed only being able to replant seedlings post-fire on private land; the United State Forest Service (USFS) has not let non governmental organizations (NGOs) replant on federal lands.
- NGOs need crews of skilled laborers spending the entire spring and fall planting seedlings.
- Highly skilled workers are needed to collect seeds- arborists with silviculture knowledge.

June 23, 2023

Presenter: Dr. Sarah Hart, Colorado State University

Topic: Vapor Pressure Deficit’s Impact on Colorado Forests

- Decrease stand density to decrease competition for soil moisture (not fully supported by research yet)
 - Studies needed to confirm if reduced competition for soil moisture would increase survivability
- Adaptive management

June 2, 2023

Presenter: Katie McGrath Novak, Forest Collaboratives Network and Dr. Camille Stevens Rumann, Colorado State University

Topics: Forest Collaborative Priorities and Post-fire Regeneration

Katie McGrath Novak- Forest Collaborative Priorities collected by the Colorado Forest Collaboratives Network:

- Support sustained, consistent funding for collaboratives.
- Work directly with collaboratives to create capacity funding models and opportunities that work.
- Create a catalyst fund for under-resourced communities to start new collaboratives.
- Give ample time for collaboratives to prepare grant applications; start preparing people with information sessions and meetings early if the application timeline cannot be changed.
- Remove barriers to prescribed fire implementation in Colorado in order to make it a more readily accessible tool for practitioners.

Dr. Camille Stevens Rumann- Post Fire Regeneration

- Capacity is a huge issue for replanting trees.
- Policies like Replant mandate any unforested acre become forested again on forest service land. We achieve around 10% of the land that needs to be reforested in any given year.
- There is a lack of knowledge and workforce to collect seeds, and optimally grow seeds in nurseries.

May 26, 2023

Presenter: Dr. Kurt Mackes, Colorado State University

Topic: Biomass

- Create biomass development opportunity zones in Colorado. Continue funding, or increase funding to, the Colorado Wood Utilization & Marketing Program.
- Increase the number of firewood burning EPA approved stoves to increase the demand for firewood.

May 19, 2023

Presenter: Becky Bollinger, Colorado Climate Center

Topic: Vapor Pressure Deficit (VPD), Forests, and Wildfires

- Look to California because they may be 5-10 years ahead of Colorado when it comes to changes in precipitation, wildfires and high VPD days. They have been doing emergency response but also looking to plan better.

2. Committee on Leveraging Resources

Committee Chair: Amy Moyer

The committee on Leveraging Resources primarily focused on developing a draft outline for the Pre-fire and Forest Health Planning Guide, as explained in more detail under Administrative Recommendations below.

In addition to the Pre-fire and Forest Health Planning Guide, the Committee heard the following presentations and discussed the following topics:

- CSFS, DFPC and DNR program updates
- Lessons learned from USFS Capacity Subcommittee, specifically relating to the federal Prescribed Fire Pause occurring in 2022 (Christina Burri, Denver Water)
- Wildfire Ready Watersheds presentation (Chris Sturm, Colorado Water Conservation Board)
- Using CSFS programs to leverage federal dollars and technical capacity funding programs (Aaron Green, CSFS and Amy Moyer, Colorado River District)
- State all-lands treatment database (Jonathan Paklaian, Arkansas River Watershed Collaborative, Brett Wolk, Colorado Forest Restoration Institute, Amanda West Fordham, CSFS)
- Application of technical modeling tools and social processes for pre-fire planning (Brett Wolk, Colorado Forest Restoration Institute)
- CSU Warner College of Natural Resources Proposal: Colorado Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience - Building Collaborative Capacity through Relationships and Co-Creation (Katie McGrath Novak, Center for Collaborative Conservation and Forest Collaborative Network Coordinator)
- Fire Adapted Communities Network resources (Alison Lerch, DNR)

2023 Council Recommendations

The Forest Health Council unanimously voted to present these five legislative concepts to the 2023 Wildfire Matters Review Committee. They also recommend these legislative concepts for consideration by Governor Polis:

Legislative Recommendations

1. Annual Appropriation for GNA

The Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) program allows the USFS and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to enter into cooperative agreements with states to perform forest, rangeland and watershed restoration projects on federal lands. CRS § 23-31-313 Healthy Forests- Vibrant Communities fund provides the statutory authority for CSFS to work collaboratively with the USFS and BLM “to implement forest management treatments that improve forest health and resilience.” The Colorado State Forest Service has the authority to conduct forest treatments on National Forests and BLM lands in Colorado, complementing work on state and private lands. Specific benefits of the Good Neighbor Authority include greater efficiencies and less need for creating and maintaining roads to address project work. Eligible projects include those that protect water supplies, manage bark beetles, reduce wildfire risk and meet other forest management objectives. The Committee recommends advocating for additional dollars per year for GNA work.

2. Appropriate \$1M specifically for capacity building through FRWRM for three years

The Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation (FRWRM) grant program funds two types of projects: fuels and forest health projects (implementation on the ground) and capacity building. Language for capacity building projects in the original legislation allowed for applicants to purchase equipment for project implementation. In 2021, Senate Bill 21-258 was passed which made several changes to the FRWRM grant program. These changes included expanding eligibility for Capacity Grant projects to those providing local governments, community groups, and collaborative forestry groups with the resources and staffing necessary to plan and implement forest restoration and wildfire risk mitigation projects. Other eligible capacity building costs include community and partner outreach and engagement, identifying priority project areas, prescription planning and acquiring community equipment for use by landowners. FRWRM’s Capacity Grants currently are funded with up to 25% of the total FRWRM funds available, and the program has an annual appropriation of \$8M. This proposal would add an additional \$1M per year for three years, in addition to the 25% of existing FRWRM funds, to the FRWRM Capacity Grants program.

3. Pilot a statewide mitigation day(s) for counties to support private landowner slash accumulation through curbside removal.

Biomass challenges are experienced at all levels of mitigation and forestry work. To make progress on removing biomass from the landscape at a property scale, a pilot program may be created in interested counties. These pilot programs would offer

mitigation day(s) where private landowners can utilize the county resources to remove slash created through mitigation and thinning.

4. Annual appropriation for the CSFS nursery for CSFS nursery staff and facilities and equipment maintenance.

Nursery sales cover operating expenses; seedlings are thus cost prohibitive to large reforestation and conservation projects. With an annual appropriation covering staff and facility expenses, the price of seedlings could be lower and accessible to more projects.

5. Support seed collection and reforestation

- a. Workforce development: Create a State Seed Collection and Reforestation Corps.
- b. Create and fund a state grant program to broadly support seed collection and storage, post-fire reforestation and revegetation project implementation and monitoring programs.
- c. Fund a Gap Analysis Study of the Reforestation Pipeline in Colorado to direct investment to areas of greatest need and identify the most impactful role for the state.

There are limited resources in the state for seed collection and reforestation, particularly conifer seeds throughout the southern Rockies and Southwest USA. Building capacity in this specific skill set is important to increase the rate and success of reforestation. Funding for entities already doing this work is needed along with investments in workforce development.

Administrative Recommendations

The Forest Health Council unanimously voted to present these four administrative recommendations to the leaders of CSFS, DFPC and DNR as well as for consideration by Governor Polis:

- 1. The Legislative Committee asks CSFS to convene a forum or meeting around adaptive silviculture, Vapor Pressure Deficit changes, and how this impacts the future health of our forests and what measures for mitigation actions we should consider.**

As temperatures in Colorado are expected to rise, Vapor Pressure Deficit is likewise expected to rise. While there is ample information on the expected atmospheric changes, there is no consensus on the best methods to mediate or adapt forest management to these changes.

2. **The Legislative Committee recommends, as part of the interagency Colorado Fire Commission Prescribed Fire Subcommittee, the CSFS, DFPC and other agencies and/or stakeholders convene an informational session(s) to increase awareness and facilitate participation in prescribed fire and slash disposal policy development in Colorado. In particular, tribal voices and perspectives shall be included to raise awareness of historic tribal cultural practices and expertise in prescribed fire. Core issues to be addressed should include: liability, smoke management and resource capacity. The agencies will have 12 months from full Forest Health Council approval to convene.**

The Forest Health Council would like to show its support for collaborative and expeditious movement towards prescribed fire implementation.

3. **The Legislative Committee recommends DNR and CSFS work with USFS to negotiate the ability for NGOs and state agencies to reforest USFS lands under Shared Stewardship or Good Neighbor Authority-type agreements. Also, state agencies lobby federal partners to expedite NEPA for post-fire reforestation projects.**

Nonprofits in the state doing reforestation are often unable to work on federal lands, which limits the scale and landscape impact of reforestation efforts.

4. Development of a Pre-fire and Forest Health Planning Guide.

The Committee on Leveraging Resources recommends the creation of a planning guide to complement or be included as a chapter within the existing Post-Fire Playbook. The planning guide would incorporate the broad expertise and experiences included with the Forest Health Council to achieve the following purpose and goal and be targeted at the following audience:

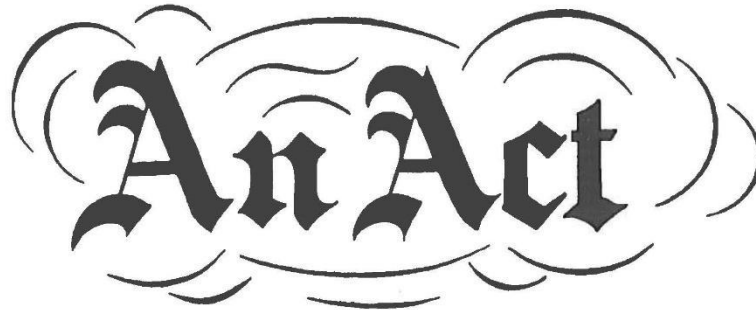
- o **Purpose:** The planning guide will assist with positioning all areas and communities in Colorado to better leverage resources, knowledge share, and be competitive at receiving funding to achieve effective forest health management and resiliency.
- o **Goal:** The planning guide provides a starting point on how to access science-based modeling, existing resources and technical capacity, and statewide priorities to improve existing processes in pre-fire planning and forest health efforts.
- o **Audience:** Targeted at the local government and community-level, while being broadly understandable to a range of stakeholders from the individual to multiple adjacent counties interested in advancing pre-fire planning and building forest health resiliency.

The Forest Health Council will create a detailed outline of the planning guide with a recommendation that the Colorado State Forest Service use existing resources to finalize the resource product in collaboration with the Forest Health Council. Should costs exceed what the CSFS can fund, an effort to solicit contributions from other partners will be made to cover the remaining costs.

Future Efforts

At their October 2023 meeting the Council will identify priorities for discussion and education during the 2023/2024 year. Prescribed fire will continue to be an area of focus as the joint Colorado Fire Commission-Colorado Forest Health Council Prescribed Fire Subcommittee continues its work. The Council will also discuss one of this year's priorities at the October meeting: forest management to protect water resources. Finally, Council staff are considering timeline modifications for the Annual Report for closer alignment with state budget schedules.

Appendix A: SB21-237



SENATE BILL 21-237

BY SENATOR(S) Donovan, Coram, Danielson, Moreno, Priola, Rankin, Simpson, Story, Garcia;
also REPRESENTATIVE(S) McCluskie and Lynch, Amabile, Bernett, Bird, Boesenecker, Cutter, Duran, Esgar, Exum, Froelich, Herod, Kipp, Lontine, McCormick, McLachlan, Ortiz, Pelton, Roberts, Snyder, Titone, Valdez A., Valdez D., Will, Young.

CONCERNING CREATION OF THE COLORADO FOREST HEALTH COUNCIL IN THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, REPEALING THE FOREST HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL WITHIN THE STATE FOREST SERVICE AND MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

SECTION 1. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 2-3-1203, **repeal** (12)(a)(III); and **add** (17)(a)(IV) as follows:

2-3-1203. Sunset review of advisory committees - legislative declaration - definition - repeal. (12) (a) The following statutory authorizations for the designated advisory committees will repeal on September 1, 2021:

Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material added to existing law; dashes through words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law and such material is not part of the act.

(III) ~~The forest health advisory council created in section 23-31-316; C.R.S.;~~

(17) (a) The following statutory authorizations for the designated advisory committees will repeal on September 1, 2026:

(IV) THE COLORADO FOREST HEALTH COUNCIL CREATED IN SECTION 23-31-316.

SECTION 2. In Colorado Revised Statutes, **repeal and reenact, with amendments,** 23-31-316 as follows:

23-31-316. Colorado forest health council - legislative declaration - repeal. (1) **Legislative declaration.** THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY HEREBY:

(a) FINDS THAT:

(I) THE FOREST HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL WAS CREATED PURSUANT TO HOUSE BILL 16-1255 WITHIN THE COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE TO PROVIDE A COLLABORATIVE FORUM TO ADVISE THE STATE FORESTER ON A RANGE OF ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS WITH REGARD TO COLORADO'S FORESTS;

(II) SINCE THEN, THE COUNCIL HAS MET REGULARLY TO DEVELOP FOREST HEALTH PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS, PROVIDE EARLY AND ONGOING INPUT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOREST ACTION PLAN, AND CONVENE DISCUSSIONS ON ISSUES SUCH AS LANDSCAPE-SCALE PLANNING, PRESCRIBED FIRES, WATERSHED HEALTH, FEDERAL FUNDING, AND OTHER TOPICS; AND

(III) DURING THE 2020 FIRE SEASON, COLORADO EXPERIENCED ITS THREE LARGEST WILDFIRES IN RECORDED HISTORY, WITH WILDFIRES STATEWIDE BURNING OVER SIX HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND ACRES AND COSTING AT LEAST TWO HUNDRED EIGHTY-FIVE MILLION DOLLARS TO SUPPRESS; AND

(b) DETERMINES THAT:

(I) THE CHALLENGES FACING COLORADO'S FORESTS, FROM INVASIVE

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SPECIES TO WILDFIRE ACTIVITY, HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY SERIOUS AND COMPLEX;

(II) THE TREND TOWARDS LARGER, MORE DESTRUCTIVE, MORE FREQUENT WILDFIRES IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE IN THE YEARS TO COME AS A RESULT OF HISTORICAL FIRE SUPPRESSION PRACTICES AND ONGOING CLIMATE-CHANGE-INDUCED SHIFTS IN WEATHER CONDITIONS AND FOREST HEALTH; AND

(III) INVESTMENTS IN FOREST HEALTH AND WILDFIRE MITIGATION HELP AVOID MORE EXPENSIVE FIRE SUPPRESSION AND RECOVERY COSTS AND PROVIDE MULTIPLE BENEFITS TO INDIVIDUALS AS WELL AS SOCIETY, INCLUDING PROTECTION OF LIVES AND PROPERTY, WATERSHEDS, WILDLIFE HABITAT, LIVELIHOODS, AND AIR QUALITY; CARBON SEQUESTRATION; AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECREATION AND SOLACE; AND

(c) DECLARES THAT:

(I) AS THE ISSUES RELATED TO FOREST HEALTH AND WILDFIRE MITIGATION HAVE EVOLVED, SO HAS THE MANNER IN WHICH THE STATE SEEKS TO ADDRESS THEM, AND CREATING A COLORADO FOREST HEALTH COUNCIL WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES TO REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND INTEGRATED STRUCTURE THROUGH WHICH TO DO SO; AND

(II) ESTABLISHING THE COLORADO FOREST HEALTH COUNCIL SERVES THE INTEREST OF THE STATE AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR FOREST HEALTH AND WILDFIRE MITIGATION.

(2) **Council created.** THERE IS HEREBY CREATED WITHIN THE DIVISION OF FORESTRY IN THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES THE COLORADO FOREST HEALTH COUNCIL, REFERRED TO THIS SECTION AS THE "COUNCIL", TO PROVIDE A COLLABORATIVE FORUM TO ADVISE THE GOVERNOR AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON A BROAD RANGE OF ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS WITH REGARD TO COLORADO'S FORESTS.

(3) **Membership.** (a) THE COUNCIL CONSISTS OF THE FOLLOWING TWENTY-SIX MEMBERS:

(I) THE FOLLOWING EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OR THEIR DESIGNEES:

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(A) THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, WHO IS THE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL;

(B) THE STATE FORESTER APPOINTED PURSUANT TO SECTION 23-31-207;

(C) THE DIRECTOR OF THE DIVISION OF FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL APPOINTED PURSUANT TO SECTION 24-33.5-1201;

(D) THE REGIONAL FORESTER OR DEPUTY REGIONAL FORESTER FOR THE UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE REGION 2;

(E) THE FORESTRY PROGRAM LEAD FOR THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT IN COLORADO;

(F) THE STATE CONSERVATIONIST FOR THE NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE IN THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

(II) THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR:

(A) AN EMPLOYEE OF THE COLORADO OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CREATED IN SECTION 24-48.5-101 WITH A LEADERSHIP ROLE AND EXPERTISE IN OUTDOOR RECREATION;

(B) ONE MEMBER WHO IS AN ENROLLED MEMBER OF A TRIBE THAT HAS A RESERVATION WITHIN COLORADO;

(C) FOUR COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, TWO OF WHOM MUST REPRESENT A COUNTY WEST OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE AND TWO OF WHOM MUST REPRESENT A COUNTY EAST OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE;

(D) ONE MEMBER WHO IS EMPLOYED OR ASSOCIATED WITH A FOREST COLLABORATIVE ORGANIZATION;

(E) ONE MEMBER WHO IS A FOREST SCIENTIST OR IS EMPLOYED IN A FOREST RESEARCH POSITION AND HAS CLIMATE SCIENCE EXPERTISE;

(F) ONE MEMBER WHO IS EMPLOYED BY A RESEARCH INSTITUTION AND WHO HAS FOREST POLICY EXPERTISE;

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(G) TWO MEMBERS EMPLOYED BY A WATER SUPPLIER, INCLUDING A MUNICIPAL DRINKING WATER SUPPLIER AND AN IRRIGATION WATER SUPPLIER, ONE OF WHOM MUST RESIDE IN A COUNTY WEST OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE AND ONE OF WHOM MUST RESIDE IN A COUNTY EAST OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE;

(H) ONE MEMBER WHO IS EMPLOYED OR ASSOCIATED WITH THE TIMBER INDUSTRY;

(I) ONE MEMBER WHO IS EMPLOYED BY OR ASSOCIATED WITH A CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION;

(J) ONE MEMBER WHO IS EMPLOYED BY OR ASSOCIATED WITH THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY;

(K) ONE MEMBER WHO IS EMPLOYED BY A PUBLIC UTILITY THAT OWNS OR OPERATES TRANSMISSION FACILITIES;

(L) ONE MEMBER WHO OWNS A RANCH AND OWNS GRAZING RIGHTS ON PUBLIC LANDS;

(M) ONE MEMBER WHO IS EMPLOYED BY OR ASSOCIATED WITH A WILDLIFE ORGANIZATION; AND

(N) ONE MEMBER WHO IS EMPLOYED BY OR ASSOCIATED WITH AN ORGANIZATION THAT ADVOCATES FOR MOTORIZED RECREATION; AND

(III) TWO MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, INCLUDING A MAJORITY AND MINORITY REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE WILDFIRE MATTERS REVIEW COMMITTEE, ONE APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND ONE APPOINTED BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES;

(b) THE TERM OF EACH COUNCIL MEMBER IS FIVE YEARS; EXCEPT THAT THE TERMS OF COUNCIL MEMBERS APPOINTED PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (3)(a)(II) OF THIS SECTION IS THREE YEARS.

(4) **Powers and duties.** (a) THE MISSION OF THE COUNCIL IS TO IMPROVE FOREST HEALTH IN COLORADO THROUGH AN INTEGRATED, SCIENCE-BASED, STATEWIDE APPROACH FOCUSED ON COLLABORATION AMONG FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, AND PRIVATE AND

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NONPROFIT PARTNERS, TO MITIGATE WILDFIRE, RESTORE ECOLOGICAL HEALTH, SAFEGUARD COMMUNITIES AND WATER SUPPLIES, MITIGATE AND ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE, SUPPORT LOCAL ECONOMIES, AND PROTECT RECREATIONAL SETTINGS, AS APPROPRIATE, ACROSS ALL JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES.

(b) IN FURTHERANCE OF ITS MISSION, THE COUNCIL SHALL ENGAGE IN AT LEAST THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES:

(I) MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOREST HEALTH AND WILDFIRE MITIGATION CAPACITY BUILDING AND FUNDING;

(II) DEVELOPMENT OF, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR, ATTAINING A THIRTY-YEAR VISION FOR FOREST HEALTH IN COLORADO, INCLUDING DEVELOPING GOALS AND BOTH ANNUAL AND MULTI-YEAR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS TO IMPROVE FOREST HEALTH AND REDUCE FIRE RISK THROUGH INCREASED FUNDING AND CAPACITY BUILDING;

(III) LANDSCAPE-SCALE PLANNING TO IDENTIFY STATE-LEVEL PRIORITIES FOR FOREST RESTORATION, WILDFIRE RISK REDUCTION, AND RELATED MANAGEMENT; KEY BARRIERS INHIBITING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THOSE PRIORITIES; AND SOLUTIONS TO OVERCOME THOSE BARRIERS;

(IV) MONITORING TRENDS RELATED TO FOREST ECOSYSTEM HEALTH, INCLUDING THOSE RELATED TO CLIMATE ADAPTATION, AND ADVISING ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR STATE-LEVEL ACTION;

(V) MONITORING AND IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT AND PROMOTE SYNERGY ACROSS FOREST-BASED COLLABORATIVES IN THE STATE, INCLUDING COORDINATING STATE FUNDING SOURCES AND SHARING BEST PRACTICES;

(VI) IDENTIFICATION OF STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING SUSTAINED CAPACITY TO CONDUCT FOREST RESTORATION AND WILDFIRE MITIGATION WORK AT SCALE THROUGH COLLABORATION ACROSS MULTIPLE AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND JURISDICTIONS; PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS; INNOVATIVE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDING VEHICLES; SHARED STEWARDSHIP; AND OTHER SOLUTIONS, WITH EMPHASIS ON LEVERAGING AND MAXIMIZING THE IMPACT AND REACH OF STATE FUNDING;

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(VII) IDENTIFICATION OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES, AS WELL AS POTENTIAL REGIONAL AND STATEWIDE ECONOMIC BENEFITS, ASSOCIATED WITH A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN WILDFIRE MITIGATION AND FOREST RESTORATION ACTIVITIES;

(VIII) DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF SOLUTIONS TO MANAGE AND UTILIZE WOODY MATERIAL PRODUCED BY MITIGATION WORK, INCLUDING CONSIDERATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS;

(IX) DEVELOPMENT OF LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICIES THAT COULD SUPPORT WILDFIRE MITIGATION AND FOREST RESTORATION GOALS; AND

(X) PROVIDING TECHNICAL EXPERTISE AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO INFORM THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH, AND FEDERAL AND LOCAL AGENCIES ON FOREST HEALTH AND WILDFIRE MITIGATION ISSUES.

(5) **Staff support.** THE DIVISION SHALL PROVIDE OFFICE SPACE, EQUIPMENT, AND STAFF SERVICES AS MAY BE NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THIS SECTION.

(6) **Reports.** AT A MINIMUM, THE COUNCIL SHALL ANNUALLY BRIEF THE WILDFIRE MATTERS REVIEW COMMITTEE CREATED IN SECTION 2-3-1602 AND SUBMIT AN ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR.

(7) **Repeal.** THIS SECTION IS REPEALED, EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 1, 2026. BEFORE THE REPEAL, THIS SECTION IS SCHEDULED FOR REVIEW IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 2-3-1203.


SECTION 3. Appropriation. For the 2021-22 state fiscal year, \$668 is appropriated to the legislative department for use by the general assembly. This appropriation is from the general fund. To implement this act, the assembly may use this appropriation for per diem and traveling expenses.

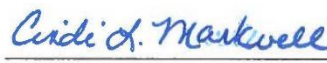
SECTION 4. Effective date. This act takes effect September 2, 2021.


SECTION 5. Safety clause. The general assembly hereby finds,

determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety.

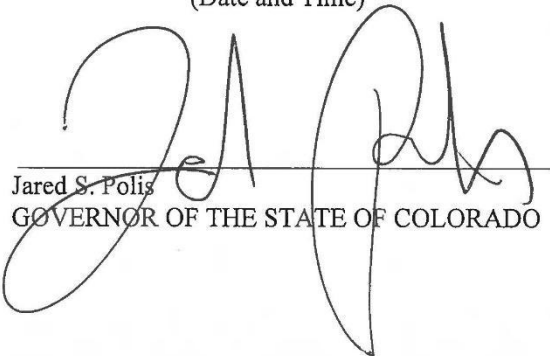

Leroy M. Garcia
PRESIDENT OF
THE SENATE


Alec Garnett
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES


Cindi L. Markwell
SECRETARY OF
THE SENATE


Robin Jones
CHIEF CLERK OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES

APPROVED June 22, 2021 at 2:00pm
(Date and Time)


Jared S. Polis
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF COLORADO

Appendix B: Committee Members

Legislative Committee

1. Samantha Albert
2. Christy Belton
3. Patt Dorsey
4. Director Matt McCombs
5. Mark Morgan
6. Commissioner Jody Shaddock McNally
7. Julie Stencil
8. Selwyn Whiteskunk

Committee on Leveraging Resources

1. Christina Burri
2. Patt Dorsey
3. Vaughn Jones
4. Katie McGrath Novak
5. Amy Moyer
6. John Ring
7. Commissioner Jody Shaddock-McNally
8. Julie Stencil
9. Selwyn Whiteskunk
10. Brett Wolk

Appendix C: Acronym List

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
COSWAP	Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program (DNR)
CSFS	Colorado State Forest Service
CWPP	Community Wildfire Protection Plan
CYCA	Colorado Youth Corps Association
DNR	Department of Natural Resources
DFPC	Division of Fire Prevention and Control
FAP	Forest Action Plan
FBLF	Forest Business Loan Fund (CSFS)
FRWRM	Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant Program (CSFS)
BIL	Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
SWIFT	State Wildland Inmate Fire Team
USFS	United States Forest Service