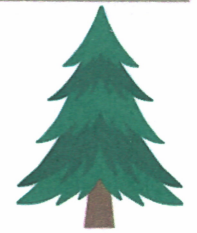


SB24-009: Wildfire Mitigation & Post-Disaster Debris Removal



Senators Jaquez Lewis & Cutter Representative Snyder



Why this bill is important:

Colorado Counties face different challenges and different levels of risk for wildfire. Counties utilize a variety of mitigation techniques. One of these techniques involves the creation of slash defined as the residue (logs, chunks, bark, branches, treetops, stumps and understory) which is created as the result of wildfire mitigation or forest work. Through concentrated efforts this excess biomass can be reduced on residential and private property.

What the bill does:

Part 1: Establishes the slash removal pilot program as a wildfire mitigation incentive for local governments. Administered by the Forest Service, this pilot program supports county efforts to efficiently and effectively remove slash by advising on best practices.

Part 2: The department of public safety will provide guidance to local governments on the following issues related to debris removal after a disaster has occurred:

- Ensuring there are not duplicate payments for debris removal by negotiating removal terms with federal emergency management agency
- Developing standard right of entry forms with opt-in and opt-out provisions and clear insurance assignment of benefit language
- Establishing right-of-way cleanup procedures, including the removal of private vehicles, for public roadways *in a manner that does not limit the rights of a utility for right-of-way*
- Considering safety and environmental concerns, including hazardous materials
- Ensuring that local debris removal programs are limited to residential debris removal

Funding:

This bill increases State expenditures to the Colorado State Forest Service(CSFS) and to the Department of Public Safety(CDPS). General fund expenditures are \$448,082 in FY24-25 and \$468,099 in FY 25-26.

History:

This bill was worked on and developed as a part of the Wildfire Matters Review Interim Committee in 2023. The data and recommendations were presented to the committee in the Colorado Forest Health Council(CFHC) annual report. The CFHC advises the governor and general assembly on a broad range of issues, opportunities, and threats with regard to Colorado's forests.

Talking Points:

This bill empowers local governments to establish programs that effectively support their communities. Ensuring that public access to this information will facilitate more efficient recovery from disasters.

Amendments being run align the State definition of slash with the federal definition and advise counties to remove slash without burning. Additionally the amendments ensure that utilities retain their rights-of-way in emergency situations.