


Wildfire Matters Review Committee
The Forest Health Advisory Council (FHAC)

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The Forest Health Advisory Council

- The Forest Health Advisory Council was created by HB16-1255
- The FHAC is currently a 21-Member Council (appointed by the Governor and other legislators) that consists of a wide range of experts consisting of experts from industries including the following stakeholder representatives:
 - Environmental organizations
 - Wood products businesses
 - Wildlife organization
 - Scientific research position
 - County Commissioners
 - Public utilities
 - Ranch owner
 - Conservation organization
 - The Governor's office
 - Economic employment organization
 - Sportsman's organization
 - Motorized recreation
 - Non-motorized recreation
 - Municipal drinking water supplier
 - Irrigation water supplier

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FHAC Task Defined in HB16-1255

Advising the State Forester on a broad range of issues, opportunities, and threats with regard to Colorado's forests

****The recommendations being discussed today are recommendations made by the FHAC to the State Forester****

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Resource Challenges – Forest Health

- Colorado Statewide Forest Resource Assessment (CSFS)
 - 642 Watershed susceptible to damaging wild fire
 - 371 watershed with high to very high risk of post-fire erosion
 - 12.6 million @ moderate to high risk of wildfire (CSFS)
 - Wildland Fire Intensity Index
 - 5.7 Million acres with high to very high rating
 - Richter Scale of wildland fire
 - Higher the rating , higher the impacts

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The Costs of Wildfire to Local Communities

Proportion of wildfire costs paid for at the local, state, and federal level

Level	Proportion
Local	40%
State	33%
Other	24%
Federal	1%

According to a study completed by Headwaters Economics in 2018, using 15 wildfires that occurred in the Western United States:

- Almost half of the full community costs of wildfire are paid for at the local level, including homeowners, businesses, and government agencies.

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Investments in Wildfire Mitigation Decrease the Costs of Suppression

According to the National Institute of Building Sciences 2017 report entitled "Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves":

- Investing in hazard mitigation measures to exceed select requirements of the 2015 International Codes, the model building codes developed by the International Code Council (ICC), can save the nation \$4 for every \$1 spent.
- Just implementing mitigation strategies would prevent 600 deaths, 1 million nonfatal injuries and 4,000 cases of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the long term.

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FHAC Identified Challenge

Challenge: Prescribed Fire

- Since 2012 when governmental immunity for prescribed fires was removed, fuel levels have continued to build up.
- The public is often not aware of the unhealthy state of Colorado's forests, and they misunderstand the necessary tools that must be utilized by land management agencies manage forests.
- Air-quality and other permitting processes and the associated limited burn windows discourage the use of prescribed fire.

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Opportunities Identified for the Challenge of Wildfire and Prescribed Fire

- Use Governmental policy to mandate forest management treatments in the WUI prior to development
- Work with local governments to develop local codes based on resiliency models
- The FHAC supports governmental immunity for State agencies to facilitate the use of prescribed fire on State and private lands
- Increase the use of prescribed fire as a matter of risk management when compared to wildfire

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Effects of Removing Governmental Immunity for Prescribed Wildfires to State Agencies

- State Agencies have no way to assist private landowners with pile burns
 - After CSFS staff remove trees and other wildfire fuels for private landowners, they are not able to complete pile burns to remove the debris from the landscape
 - Number of slash piles built up on private lands in Colorado: 2,587 piles
- CSFS and its employees are no longer able to assist other agencies with broadcast burns.
 - CSFS personnel have unique qualifications to help reduce fuels in the State through prescribed burns

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Prescribed Fire as a Tool for Land Managers

- The FHAC supports the use of prescribed fire for State Agencies as a tool for land management
- Colorado forests evolved with wildfires that periodically cleared out dead and diseased trees, reducing fuels for large wildfires
- Due to a build up of fuels and insect and disease activity, some of Colorado's forests are now crowded with thick trees and dense under growths, increasing the risk of large wildfires
- Prescribed fire is an effective way to reduce dangerous accumulation of combustible fuels.
- Wildfires that burn in areas where fuels have been reduced by prescribed fire cause less damage and are easier to control.

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FHAC Recommendations

- Support State Agencies to receiving Governmental Immunity for prescribed burns
- Expand funding available for prescribed burns
- Expand funding opportunities for active forest management treatments and projects that are consistent, repeatable, and ongoing such as a voluntary tax on certain goods that benefit from healthy forests and clean water
- Expand public outreach on the importance of forest health to Colorado's citizens to include
 - Intricate tie to water resource quality and quantity
 - Public health, environment, economics, recreation, and insurance
- Creation of a Colorado Forest Plan that includes information on the true cost of wildfire and to whom that cost accrues

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Thank You/Questions

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FHAC WEBPAGE:

www.csfs.colostate.edu/forest-health-advisory-council/

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