

Boulder County Board of County Commissioners

Federal Forest Health and Wildfire Mitigation Programs

For more information, contact Megan Davis, 303-441-3562, mdavis@bouldercounty.org

Emergency Watershed Protection Program – Congressman Gardner is familiar this program, but locally relevant information on how and why this funding has been critical for Boulder County might be helpful.

- Boulder County received nearly \$900,000 for emergency stabilization of the Fourmile Canyon Fire area.
- Funding allowed for reseeded, soil stabilization through mulching, and flood mitigation preparations with mountain communities (sand bags, culvert work, etc.), which minimized damage from floods after the fires.

USFS Wildland Fire Management Fund – Colorado continues to experience drought, and projections for the 2013 wildfire season are bleak. Restoration of funding for the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Wildfire Management Fund is gravely needed to ensure that the USFS can be prepared to address wildfires in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Colorado Senators joined together to request an additional \$653 million for firefighting and fire prevention, though that effort unfortunately was unsuccessful. The additional funding would be used for pre-positioning ground crews, hot shots and air support in places where wildfire risk is very high. The funds also would be available for the acquisition of additional large air tankers and the removal of hazardous fuels in the wildland-urban interface, the fire-prone areas between cities and the backcountry.

The federal fire-management budget has failed to keep pace with the actual cost of fighting wildfires, forcing the USFS and other agencies to utilize funds that were allocated for other purposes, such as watershed restoration and rangeland management. We ask Congress to increase the USFS appropriation to fund to the projected median cost of the fire season of \$1.584 billion.

Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program – The purpose of the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program is to encourage collaborative ecosystem restoration of priority forest landscapes. This work helps restore forests and reduce the risk of wildfire.

Colorado is the only state to have received funding for two landscape restoration projects: One on the Front Range and one on the Western Slope. The Colorado Front Range project includes work in the Arapahoe-Roosevelt and Pike-San Isabel forests affecting counties from Larimer to El Paso.

According to the 2012 report, overall the 23 projects nationwide have:

- Created and maintained an estimated 3,375 part and full-time jobs during 2011 and 4,574 part and full-time jobs during FY 2012.
- Sold 94.1 million cubic feet of timber and produced 1,158,000 green tons of biomass.
- Provided an additional \$45.4 million of partner and Forest Service investment to leverage federal CFLR and matching dollars.
- Generated nearly \$320 million of labor income.

- Removed fuel for destructive mega-fires on 383,000 acres near communities.
- Reduced mega-fire on an additional 229,000 acres.
- Improved 537,000 acres of wildlife habitat.
- Restored 394 miles of fish habitat.
- Enhanced clean water supplies by remediating or decommissioning 6,000 miles of eroding roads.

Projects are planned and approved for 10 years, but funding for this program needs to be renewed on an ongoing basis.

Farm Bill Programs and Good Neighbor and Forest Stewardship Contract Reauthorization –

We ask that these provisions are included in the House and Senate versions of the Farm Bill that are expected to be considered in 2013. In 2012, the USFS awarded more than \$13 million in new stewardship contracts in Colorado, which reduce hazardous fuels, improve public safety, protect water supplies, and serve as an economic and market generators for biomass.

The stewardship contracts also add to Colorado's balance of clean, renewable energy by supporting biomass energy, including electricity and heat for Eagle Valley Clean Energy in Gypsum, and wood pellets for clean and efficient heating at Confluence Energy in Kremmling.

Forest Legacy Program – The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) supports state efforts to protect environmentally sensitive forest lands. Designed to encourage the protection of privately owned forest lands, FLP is an entirely voluntary program. To maximize the public benefits it achieves, the program focuses on the acquisition of partial interests in privately owned forest lands.