# ADDRESSING THE WILDLAND FIRE THREAT TO THE PEOPLE AND PROPERTY OF COLORADO

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Aviation Week & Space Technology Magazine

Colorado enjoys a unique opportunity and responsibility for guardianship of our most precious resource: water. The importance of water quality for Colorado is literally a matter of life and death, not only for Colorado, but for the lower basin states as well. Consider life without a reliable source of clean water. We would be unable to grow food safely, swim in our lakes and rivers, or maintain the environment. The devastation caused by a catastrophic fire in Colorado watersheds cannot be overstated. In 2012, Denver Water spent $5 million to remediate water and one of their watersheds from just one small fire.

The Waldo Canyon Fire, the most destructive fire in Colorado's history, began three miles outside of Colorado Springs on June 26, fuelled by 100-degree temperatures, low humidity, and 55-65 mph winds. Within minutes, flames jumped two firebreaks and raced into the Mountain Shadows neighborhood, ultimately destroying 346 homes and killing two people.

- Colorado has nearly 4 million acres of dead trees, killed by pine beetles, drought, and disease. These constitute a clear potential for cataclysmic "mega-fires", fed by unprecedented quantities of fuel.
- A steadily increasing number of homes being built in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). More people are moving into rural areas, building homes and communities in forests. This changes the costs, dynamics, and strategies of firefighting.
- Chronic, severe drought. The western US has been in a drought for 12 years. Forecasters believe similar conditions will persist for at least two more years.

National Interagency Fire Center data indicate that as of the end of November, 55,544 fires have burned 9,159,917 acres throughout the US in 2012. Of those, 1,330 fires consumed 243,811 acres in Colorado. The statistics only refer to fires on federal land, or state/local incidents supported by federal firefighting assets.

Colorado's Division of Fire Prevention and Control reported Colorado fire departments reported 4,167 wildland fires through the National Fire Incident Reporting System in 2012. These fires destroyed more than 648 structures, killed 6 civilians, burned more than 384,803 acres and have caused at least $538 million in property losses. In 2012, there were a total of 16 fires qualifying for Colorado's Emergency Fire Fund. The total suppression costs for these fires (state share) are estimated to be $48.1 million.

Well-meaning policies and strategies that called for extinguishing all fires interrupted nature's pattern of natural, lightning-initiated fires that swept the forest floor of debris and undergrowth, ultimately promoting healthier trees. A powerful environmental movement prompted forest management policies to shift away from "harvesting" timber to "protecting" it by essentially banning commercial logging on federal lands. This has resulted in today's extraordinary buildup of "biomass", meaning there's more fuel to burn.

Perhaps the simplest form of economic warfare is wildland arson-- setting fires in US forests and grasslands. For terrorists to inflict significant damage to both Colorado's natural resources and property with very little investment of risk, fire is an extremely high-leverage weapon of mass effect.

In Colorado, we're already engaged in fire combat; recently, 25 fires were started within a few miles of each other in El Paso and Teller counties. Each one was attributed to arson but extinguished before they caused much damage. The arsonist is still at large. In early July, there were 12 major fires burning in Colorado. Six of them consumed almost 167,000 acres, an area more than four times the size of Washington, D.C.

**REFER TO YOUTUBE: ECONOMIC WARFARE SUPER PANEL – WILLIAM SCOTT (9min)**
**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFHM0rd9cX8**

Once the fire has run its course, however, its destruction cannot only be measured in its immediate damage to properties, livelihoods, and lives. Fire has an enduring impact to the natural resources of the region, ravaging Colorado's water supply and subsequently the Lower Basin states. Fires strip the surrounding topography of trees and other vegetation, leaving a layer of ash that is then washed into adjacent water supplies. This sediment contains caustic materials and harmful elements such as arsenic, lead, copper, and zinc, and has the capacity to diminish water storage capacity and clog intakes of water treatment plants.

The Hayman Fire of 2002 caused unparalleled damage to the hillsides surrounding Denver Water's Cheesman Reservoir; as a result, every ensuing rainfall deposited ash, mud, and debris into the reservoir. As of 2012, the water utility has spent roughly $26 million dollars replanting trees to restore a degree of solidity to the soil encircling the reservoir. Rampart Reservoir, a major depository for the drinking water of Colorado Springs, was similarly threatened by the rampaging Waldo Canyon Fire. While the fire was barely stopped short, an analogous circumstance cannot be allowed to threaten our state's water supplies and consequently the health and well-being of Colorado's residents.

Colorado's forests are an ideal target for terrorists waging economic warfare. The Navy SEALS who killed Osama bin Laden also captured material including a detailed campaign for starting fires throughout the west. US officials have determined that some fires in California last year were ignited by al Qaeda operatives. There's reason to believe America is under attack, but we still treat fire as a land-management issue, rather than a grave national security issue.

The Waldo Canyon Fire burned 18,247 acres and forced 32,000 people to evacuate. The direct cost of bringing the Waldo Canyon Fire under control totaled about $15 million. Investigators have not determined the cause. Was the Waldo Canyon Fire started by terrorists? If it was an economic warfare attack, it was a huge success. Home losses alone will exceed $100 million. Evacuated businesses lost another few million dollars. Thousands of tourists were either evacuated from the mountains or avoided the area completely. One community suffered 74% job losses due to layoffs, and business revenues are down 45%-65%.

Another issue is that federal land-management agencies are not equipped to address wildfire as a pressing national security issue. The US Forest Service's culture and structure in particular are not compatible with making national-level strategic decisions. These agencies take pride in a philosophy that dictates local decisions be made by those "closest to the land". The autonomy of USFS District Rangers and Forest Supervisors is both appropriate and legendary, but it inhibits the centralized decision-making necessary to rebuild the nation's aerial firefighting arm and make other national-scale financial or policy decisions. Consequently, the Forest Service should not be counted upon to develop, procure, and field a robust air tanker fleet.

Relying on the federal government to provide firefighting resources during a nationwide terrorist attack is a risk few are willing to assume, so Colorado and other western states will be left to fend for themselves. Before the tragic losses of the 2002 fire season, the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management had 44 large tankers under contract. Only seven commercial tankers are on US government contracts today, augmented occasionally by aircraft from Canada and transports from the US Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard.

Several significant issues prevent the federal government from responding to this national security issue. Since July 1, 2012, crews have been battling fires on federal land in 22 states, but wildfires seldom impact a large enough area to become a national concern. The result is a dearth of the "snowball effect" that typically drives political action in America. Until we lose a national asset, it is unlikely the nation's citizens will be galvanized to demand a solution.

It's apparent that the best tool would be the establishment of an Air Corps command center, staffed by a relatively small group of full-time, professional aerial firefighters tasked with hitting fires before they escape and grow. A small cadre of government fire management experts could oversee private-sector design, construction, and operation of "purpose-built" air tankers and helicopters. This group would be encouraged to incorporate innovative fire suppression methods as well, drawing on technologies developed by universities and government laboratories.

Once we acknowledge we're engaged in a brutal economic war-by-fire, we can adopt strategies like using NASA and Defense Department satellites to spot new fires. We must develop and field a robust large-air-tanker fleet of firefighting aircraft so that we can utilize infrared-equipped aircraft over fire-prone forests and operate Fire Combat Air Patrols around the clock. Suppression of wildfires has become an important, expensive resource preservation and homeland security issue. It can no longer be left to biologists and forestry majors who leave their desks to become part-time firefighters each summer. Today's volatile wild-land conditions demand a centralized, professional Air Corps equal to the challenges of dangerous fires.

The 2012 wildfire season has shown the shocking potential of wildfires in our state. Colorado has an indisputable charge to shield itself against this devastating force of nature. Wildfire, due to its pervasive destruction of life, property, infrastructure, land, air and water resources, presents a clear and present danger to the citizens of Colorado and the Western United States. There is no greater importance to the health and safety of our state. If Colorado finds itself alone on the front line of a catastrophic wildfire, the power and flexibility of an aerial firefighting fleet could easily be the difference between a contained, controllable fire or an unmanageable inferno that has the destructive potential to threaten the health, safety and economic viability of the Western United States. It cannot be overstated that a devastating wildfire in a Colorado water shed has the potential to drastically and dramatically alter our quality of life in Colorado for us and our children for many years to come.

## YOUR CALL TO ACTION

### FOR YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS AND STATE

Call the appropriate elected officials listed below and respectfully ask them to support the **COLORADO WILDFIRE AERIAL FIRE FIGHTING FLEET** during the 2013 legislative session and future fire-fighting seasons. Thank you for your time and support!

## COLORADO SENATORS

| Senator | Dist | Pty | Cap # 303-866- | Other # |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aguilar, Irene | 32 | D | 4852 | |
| Balmer, David | 27 | R | 4883 | |
| Baumgardner, Randy | 8 | R | 5292 | 970-509-9187 |
| Brophy, Greg | 1 | R | 6360 | 970-332-5766 |
| Cadman, Bill | 12 | R | 4880 | 719-570-9300 |
| Carroll, Morgan | 29 | D | 4879 | |
| Crowder, Larry W. | 35 | R | 4875 | 719-850-2459 |
| Giron, Angela | 3 | D | 4878 | 719-778-7386 |
| Grantham, Kevin | 2 | R | 4877 | 719-275-9785 |
| Guzman, Lucia | 34 | D | 4862 | 720-833-8990 |
| Harvey, Ted | 30 | R | 4881 | |
| Heath, Rollie | 18 | D | 4872 | 720-272-2389 |
| Hill, Owen | 10 | R | 2737 | 719-210-1086 |
| Hodge, Mary | 25 | D | 4855 | 303-659-3298 |
| Hudak, Evie | 19 | D | 4840 | 303-423-8569 |
| Jahn, Cheri | 20 | D | 4856 | 303-424-0086 |
| Johnston, Michael | 33 | D | 4864 | 720-838-7633 |
| Jones, Matt | 17 | D | 5291 | 303-718-7510 |
| Kefalas, John | 14 | D | 4841 | |
| Kerr, Andy | 22 | D | 4859 | 720-979-4515 |
| King, Steve | 7 | R | 3077 | |
| Lambert, Kent | 9 | R | 4835 | 719-685-9397 |
| Lundberg, Kevin | 15 | R | 4853 | 970-532-3070 |
| Marble, Vicki | 23 | R | 4876 | 970-988-6924 |
| Morse, John P. | 11 | D | 6364 | 719-302-5697 |
| Newell, Linda | 26 | D | 4846 | 303-956-9448 |
| Nicholson, Jeanne | 16 | D | 4873 | 303-582-5830 |
| Renfroe, Scott W. | 13 | R | 4451 | |
| Roberts, Ellen | 6 | R | 4884 | 970-259-1594 |
| Scheffel, Mark | 4 | R | 4869 | |
| Schwartz, Gail | 5 | D | 4871 | 970-925-3013 |
| Steadman, Pat | 31 | D | 4861 | 720-530-7047 |
| Tochtrop, Lois | 24 | D | 4863 | 303-469-9217 |
| Todd, Nancy | 28 | D | 3432 | 303-596-0392 |
| Ulibarri, Jessie | 21 | D | 4857 | 720-434-3747 |

## COLORADO REPRESENTATIVES

| Representative | Dist | Pty | Rm # | Cap # 303-866- | Other # |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Buck, Perry | 49 | R | 271 | 2907 | 970-460-0824 |
| Buckner, John W. | 40 | D | 300 | 2944 | |
| Conti, Kathleen | 38 | R | 208 | 2953 | 303-507-5170 |
| Coram, Don | 58 | R | 212 | 2955 | 970-249-0724 |
| Court, Lois | 6 | D | 223 | 2967 | 303-355-3546 |
| DelGrosso, Brian | 51 | R | 271 | 2947 | 970-669-1170 |
| Dore, Timothy | 64 | R | 271 | 2398 | 719-297-1664 |
| Duran, Crisanta | 5 | | JBC | 2925 | 970-759-4157 |
| Everett, Justin | 22 | R | 271 | 2927 | |
| Exum, Tony | 17 | D | 357 | 3069 | 719-661-4910 |
| Ferrandino, Mark | 2 | D | 246 | 2346 | |
| Fields, Rhonda | 42 | D | 317 | 3911 | 303-246-8280 |
| Fischer, Randy | 53 | D | 301 | 2917 | 970-226-5383 |
| Foote, Mike | 12 | D | 357 | 2920 | |
| Garcia, Leroy M. | 46 | D | 320 | 2968 | |
| Gardner, Bob | 20 | R | 217 | 2191 | |
| Gerou, Cheri | 25 | R | JBC | 2582 | 720-635-3806 |
| Ginal, Joann | 52 | D | 301 | 4569 | 970-419-1116 |
| Hamner, Millie | 61 | D | 318 | 2952 | |
| Holbert, Chris | 44 | R | 314 | 2933 | 303-550-6196 |
| Hullinghorst, Dickey.L | 10 | D | 246 | 2348 | 303-530-0507 |
| Humphrey, Stephen | 48 | R | 206 | 2943 | 970-290-8589 |
| Joshi, Janak | 16 | R | 271 | 2937 | |
| Kagan, Daniel | 3 | D | 300 | 2921 | 720-519-1319 |
| Kraft-Tharp, Tracy | 29 | D | 357 | 2950 | 720-937-1506 |
| Labuda, Jeanne | 1 | D | 305 | 2966 | 303-914-9494 |
| Landgraf, Lois | 21 | R | 271 | 2946 | |
| Lawrence,Polly | 39 | R | 302 | 2935 | 720-785-3303 |
| Lebsock, Steve | 34 | D | 322 | 2931 | |
| Lee, Sanford "Pete" | 18 | D | 223 | 2932 | 719-460-2834 |
| Levy, Claire | 13 | D | JBC | 2578 | 303-494-2244 |
| May, Jenise | 30 | D | 318 | 2945 | 720-324-8322 |
| McCann, Elizabeth | 8 | D | 317 | 2959 | 303-333-0233 |
| McLachlan, Mike | 59 | D | 307 | 2914 | |
| McNulty, Frank | 43 | R | 205 | 2936 | 303-683-8873 |
| Melton, Jovan | 41 | D | 307 | 2919 | 720-236-9832 |
| Mitsch Bush, Diane | 26 | D | 316 | 2923 | |
| Moreno,Dominick | 32 | D | 357 | 2964 | 720-985-1132 |
| Murray, Carole | 45 | R | 302 | 2948 | 303-683-0575 |
| Navarro, Clarice | 47 | R | 271 | 2905 | |
| Nordberg, Dan | 14 | R | 271 | 2965 | |
| Pabon, Dan | 4 | D | 227 | 2954 | |
| Peniston, Cherylin | 35 | D | 323 | 2843 | 303-466-2884 |
| Pettersen,Brittany | 28 | D | 306 | 2939 | |
| Primavera, Dianne | 33 | D | 323 | 4667 | |
| Priola, Kevin | 56 | R | 271 | 2912 | 303-923-5138 |
| Rankin, Bob | 57 | R | 271 | 2949 | 970-948-1117 |
| Rosenthal, Paul | 9 | D | 307 | 2910 | 720-529-9787 |
| Ryden, Su | 36 | D | 357 | 2942 | 303-898-5797 |
| Saine,Lori | 63 | R | 208 | 2906 | |
| Salazar, Joseph A. | 31 | D | 323 | 2918 | 303-895-7044 |
| Schafer, Sue | 24 | D | 305 | 5522 | 303-918-2660 |
| Scott, Ray | 55 | R | 212 | 3068 | |
| Singer, Jonathan | 11 | D | 316 | 2780 | 303-875-4727 |
| Sonnenberg, Jerry | 65 | R | 206 | 3706 | 970-581-8648 |
| Stephens, Amy | 19 | R | 271 | 2924 | 719-229-6675 |
| Swalm, Spencer | 37 | R | 314 | 5510 | 303-694-9390 |
| Szabo, Libby | 27 | R | 205 | 2962 | |
| Tyler, Max | 23 | D | 306 | 2951 | 303-915-8475 |
| Vigil, Edward | 62 | D | 320 | 2916 | 719-588-2141 |
| Waller, Mark | 15 | R | 202 | 5523 | 719-570-1785 |
| Williams, Angela | 7 | D | 322 | 2909 | 720-257-9575 |
| Wilson, James D. | 60 | R | 271 | 2747 | 719-221-8383 |
| Wright. Jared | 54 | R | 217 | 2583 | 970-201-5711 |
| Young, Dave | 50 | D | 307 | 2929 | |

To determine who your legislators are, please contact your local County Clerk's office.