

## **10:12 AM -- Joint Water Resources Review Committee and Wildfire Matters Review Committee**

Senator Schwartz, Chair of the Water Resources Review Committee and Senator Nicholson, Chair of the Wildfire Matters Review Committee, called the meeting to order and discussed overlapping interests of the committees.

## **10:15 AM**

Travis Smith, Superintendent of the San Luis Valley Irrigation District, Rio Grande Basin representative on the Colorado Water Conservation Board, and member of the Interbasin Compact Committee, provided an update on impacts in the Rio Grande Basin from recent wildland fires and describes the activities of the Rio Grande Watershed Emergency Action Coordination Team. He discussed the need for the state to take a more active role in forest management on federal lands to protect watershed and other resources. He also discussed measures to promote watershed resiliency and stewardship agreements ([Attachment A](#)) and responded to questions from the committee about post fire impacts to reservoirs and the cost of mitigating these impacts.

## **10:23 AM**

Senator Roberts explained that the Water Resources Review Committee requested Draft Bill 4 to create watershed roundtables. However, the bill is not ready to be recommended to Legislative Council. Instead she will work with Mr. Smith and other interested persons to develop similar legislation to protect watersheds.

## **10:27 AM**

Representative Mitsch Bush identified local watershed protection efforts occurring across Colorado including the Routt County community wildfire protection (CWPP) plan that was developed in response to recent federal and state legislation. Specifically, the federal Healthy Forest Restoration Act directs federal agencies to collaborate with communities in developing hazardous fuel reduction projects and in the prioritization of treatment areas as defined by a CWPP. In 2009, the Colorado legislature enacted Senate Bill 09-001 to establish CWPPs at the county level to address fire hazard areas within unincorporated areas.

## **10:32 AM**

Mr. Smith continued to discuss his proposal to promote watershed resiliency and stewardship agreements. He also discussed the role of watershed protection in basin implementation plans of basin roundtables and the development of the Colorado Water Plan. He responded to questions from the committee about post-fire impacts to watershed and the time required to return a watershed to pre-fire conditions.

## **10:45 AM**

Lisa Dale, Colorado Assistant Director, Department of Natural Resources, discussed local forest collaboratives that work with private landowners and federal agencies to manage forest health, protect watersheds, and address other issues.

## **10:53 AM**

Ms. Dale responded to questions from the committee about federal moneys provided to states that can be used for forest health and watershed protection projects. She also described a recent meeting in Montrose to discuss policies to promote forest health in Colorado and other states and she discussed the federal weight limit for interstate highways and its effect on vehicles transporting timber in Colorado.

**11:07 AM**

Senator Schwartz announced that U.S. Senator Mark Udall is sponsoring legislation to allow the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to work with states and local entities on wildfire mitigation projects. The bill places wildfires on par with other natural disasters, such as hurricanes, floods and tornadoes, and makes Colorado and other states eligible to receive an additional 15 percent of the total funds FEMA allocates for fire suppression to support wildfire mitigation efforts..

**11:07 AM**

Senator Nicholson invited members of the Wildfire Matters Review Committee to describe legislation that they requested to be drafted.

**11:09 AM**

Representative Levy described the provisions of Draft Bill 1 concerning wildfire mitigation codes for new construction.

**11:12 AM**

Representative Levy described the provisions of Draft Bill 2 concerning the removal of trees by local governments to reduce fire risk.

**11:14 AM**

Senator Nicholson described the provisions of Draft Bill 3 concerning restrictions on fireworks and agricultural burning during periods of high fire danger. Paul Cook, Director, Division of Fire Prevention and Control, responded to questions from the committee about fires related to agricultural burns and the provisions of Draft Bill 3. He also discussed the authority of counties to regulate open burning and fireworks.

**11:21 AM**

Representative Hamner described the provisions of Draft Bill 4 that authorizes the Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority to issue loans to private entities for watershed protection and forest health projects.

**11:22 AM**

Senator Roberts described the provisions of Draft Bill 5 concerning changes to the wildfire mitigation tax deduction credit.

**11:26 AM**

Senator Nicholson described the provisions of Draft Bill 6 concerning local firefighter safety fund ([Attachment B](#)).

**11:29 AM**

Senator Roberts described the provisions of Draft Bill 7 concerning wildland firefighters death benefit payments.

**11:29 AM**

Director Cook described the provisions of Draft Bill 8 concerning immunity for public agencies in wildfire mitigation.

**11:32 AM**

Director Cook described the provisions of Draft Bill 9 concerning changes to the prescribed burning program laws.

**11:32 AM**

Senator Roberts described the provisions of Draft Bill 10 that creates the wildfire information and resource center. Director Cook responded to questions from the committee about the cost of hosting the wildfire information and resource center on the Division of Fire Prevention and Control's website.

**11:35 AM**

Senator Schwartz announced that the Water Resources Review Committee will not recommend Draft Bill 4 concerning watershed roundtables to allow additional time for interested persons to develop alternative legislation.

**11:38 AM**

The joint meeting adjourned.