

# 2009 Wildfire Preparedness Fund Report to the Governor

## Colorado Wildfire Seasons:

Wildfire management is based on calendar year (January 1 to December 31). Within this year, wildfire management planning is parsed into three time periods determined by historical reference: January through March; April through October; November through December.

- April through October is the most active period and considered the primary fire season in Colorado.
- The other two periods are considered secondary (or off season) periods where wildfire frequency is lower than during the primary wildfire season.

## 2009 Fire Season Summary

Colorado experienced dry conditions in the first quarter of 2009. Fire activity reflected this with large fires occurring in Boulder County, commencing on January 7. Periodic precipitation in the form of rain and snowfall from March through June tempered fire activity during the spring months. Fire activity picked up on the western slope and southern front range in July with large fires in Montrose County, Fremont County and Rio Blanco County, see table below.

2009 Colorado Fire Statistics to date include 2,671 reported fires on non-federal land affecting 29,345 acres of land.

Fire Name	Acreage	Structures Threatened	Structures Lost	Est. cost to State or EFF	Notes:
Olde Stage	1300	400+	2	180,000	Boulder County EFF
Newlin Creek	1420	47	0	\$135,000	Fremont County EFF
Grammar	801	100	0	\$337,000	Montrose County EFF
Spring Creek	1340	6	0	\$110,000	Rio Blanco County EFF
TOTALS	3583	707	28	\$761,356.00	

Colorado preparedness resources were in place and available during the 2009 fire season. The Preparedness Fund began the year with a healthy carry over from the 2008 fire season mostly due to recovery from various sources dating back to 2002. The carry over allowed for expansion of state technical assistance to Colorado fire departments and to our federal interagency partners.

This report details the use and accomplishments of the Preparedness Fund in 2009.

### **Preparedness Fund Management:**

The intent of preparedness activities is to place Colorado in a state of readiness to aggressively, safely, and effectively respond to protect life, property, critical watersheds and resources when threatened by wildfire. Successful Preparedness programs allow flexible implementation of management actions to conserve resources when conditions do not require them -- and the rapid addition of resources when they are needed.

Preparedness activities and expenditures are established for an "average" wildfire season using a 10 year rolling average process. It is critical to note that the \$3.25 million annual preparedness fund is based upon the expectation of an "average" fire season – specific needs can vary significantly according to the weather, long term fuel moisture, and other conditions which are unique to each individual fire season. It is not unusual for fire seasons to begin quietly and suddenly turn active. Preparedness funding allows for flexibility in contracting, training, and organizing so appropriate expenditures can be made within the range of normal variation.

The Preparedness Plan and corresponding budget is developed by a multi-party committee identified in state statute and submitted to the Governor for approval. The Governor, by executive order or proclamation, authorizes the release of funds from the state treasury to CSFS for the implementation of the plan.

### **Preparedness Fund Activities and Accomplishments:**

#### **Single Engine Air Tankers (SEAT)**

Queen Bee Aviation, based in Rigby, Idaho continued to be the contractor for exclusive use Single Engine Air Tankers in 2009. CSFS is in the fourth year of a five year contract with Queen Bee Aviation and activated the 2009 portion of the contract in April 2009.

Significant events: Local fire department and interagency partners were trained and organized, improving local capacity to use SEAT in a safe and effective way. The number of SEAT bases was increased with the addition of bases in Buena Vista and Akron, reducing the length of time to respond to wildfires.

Queen Bee supplied 4 different planes during the fire season. CSFS coordinated with federal aviation partners in strategically locating the planes at bases around the state as fire activity changed. The planes flew successfully on 59 separate fires, dropping a total of 148,556 gallons of retardant. Details are in the tables below.

<b>2009 SEAT Summary</b>	
<b># SEATs</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Total # Incidents</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Total # Loads</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>Total Flight Time (hrs)</b>	<b>166.67</b>

<b>Total # Gallons Delivered</b>	<b>148,556</b>
<b># Days available during fire season</b>	<b>351</b>
<b># Days available during off season</b>	<b>152</b>
<b># Fires &gt; 100 ac</b>	<b>12</b>
<b># Fires &lt; 100 ac</b>	<b>47</b>

<b>Aircraft</b>	<b>Identifier</b>	<b>Days under Contract</b>	<b>Missions Flow</b>	<b>Gallons of Retardant Delivered</b>
<b>SEAT (802)</b>	<b>T-875</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>54,102</b>
<b>SEAT (802)</b>	<b>T-878</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>68,225</b>
<b>SEAT (802)</b>	<b>T-880</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6,655</b>
<b>SEAT (802)</b>	<b>T-882</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>19,574</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>148,556</b>

### **National Guard: Helicopters:**

National Guard Aviation and Ground resources were ready and available for use but due to the relatively light fire season were not used in 2009. National Guard conducted and hosted a multi-state training session and conducted proficiency missions for their heavy and medium water dropping helicopters (Chinooks and Blackhawks).

### **State Wildland Engine Resources**

13 State Wildland Engines are available as single resources or strike teams for in state or out of state assignments. CSFS staffs 4 of the engines with permanent engine crews assigned to CSFS Districts along the front range. The other 9 engines are pre-positioned at CSFS Districts or Fire Departments. Engines are staffed by crews of three. Ordering is through interagency dispatch zone protocol.

Significant events: State Engine crews assisted in treating over 6600 acres with prescribed fire and mechanical treatments. Four CSU interns from the Warner College of Natural Resources worked with the Fort Collins engine crew on mitigation and wildfire projects in Larimer and La Plata Counties.

State wildland engines responded to 32 wildfire assignments in Colorado.

In addition, the engines participated in 72 Prescribed Fire assignments and other hazard fuels mitigation projects.

<b>2009 State Engine Summary</b>									
Engine #	Engine Location	Type	In State Wildland Fires	Out of State Wildland Fires	Rx Fire Assists	Rx Acres Treated	Other Mitigation	Other Mitigation Acres Treated	False Alarms
612	Alamosa	T-6	0	0	2	750	0	0	0
611	AL-Great Sand Dunes	T-6	0	0	5	1750	2	100	2
621	Boulder	T-6	5	0	4	400	4	183	0
461	Canon City	T-6	2	0	6	1100	8	50	0
622	Fort Collins	T-6	6	0	4	400	6	30	0
44	Wellington	T-4	4	0	0	0	6	30	0
Brush 10	Aspen Grand Junction	T-6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2041	NE Teller Woodland Park	T-4	2	0	2	60	0	0	0
741	Littleton Franktown	T-4	0	0	1	200	0	0	0
2061	El Paso County	T-6	0	0	3	1100	4	40	3
841	Golden	T-4	2	0	12	410	2	2	0
619	Granby	T-6	2	0	1	40	0	0	0
6131	LaJunta	T-6	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>32</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>6210</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>5</b>

### **Colorado Department of Corrections Inmate Crews:**

Established Inmate Crews are positioned at the Canon City, Rifle, and Buena Vista facilities. Department of Correction Fire crews worked 70 days on 22 fires. Twenty (20) of those days and 11 assignments were worked either prior to May 1 or after September 15 time periods when the DOC crews are basically the only handcrew resource in the State. Fifteen (15) of the 22 assignments were on county jurisdiction fires where the crews were utilized as intended by the wildfire emergency response fund. Sixteen (16) of the 22 assignments were for 2 days. Seventy-five (75) offender firefighters were trained and equipped. Another 25 received saw training and worked strictly on trail & fuels.

Additionally, crews planted 26,000 trees and thinned hundreds of acres of timber to reduce fire potential. Customers have included Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), the United States Forest Service, the Department of Defense, the Denver Water Board, various local governments such as the towns and cities of Vail, Eagle, Canon City, Silt, Newcastle, and Garfield County.

Based upon fire alone we estimate cost savings of nearly \$250,000 for the taxpayers.

## **Support to Counties and Fire Departments**

### **Federal Excess Property**

CSFS currently supports 124 fire engines on loan to counties and fire departments under the Federal Excess Personal Property program. Ninety-two (92) fire engines are Type 4 engines, which are capable of delivering 1,000 gallons of water and thirty-two (32) fire engines are Type 6 engines capable of delivering 250 gallons of water. CSFS inspects and provides major repairs on all these resources.

### **Shelters for Training**

509 New Generation Fire Shelters (valued at \$139,150) were provided to rural Colorado Fire Departments that improved the capability, quality, and safety of the firefighters by attending wildland fire training during the year, and then successfully completed Work Capacity (physical fitness) Testing for line firefighter positions.

### **Fire Billing Services to Fire Departments**

CSFS received, audited and paid 329 invoices from 103 Colorado cooperators (fire departments and counties) for incident assignments for total of \$2.63 million. Seventy-two (72) invoices are still in the review process. (some cooperators went on more than one fire/incident)

CSFS billed jurisdictionally responsible partners for 200 different incidents (102 in Colorado and 98 outside Colorado) for the cost of providing cooperator resources to assist in the suppression of wildfires

A total of 170 invoices were sent to federal partners for reimbursement of CSFS expenses incurred while providing resources for fire suppression.

### **State Mob Plan**

CSFS provided two personnel to work in coordination with the Division of Fire Safety, Division of Emergency Management, and Colorado County representatives to prepare the Colorado All-Hazard Mobilization Plan. These quarterly meetings also provide oversight and quality control for certification of Colorado's Type Three Incident Management Teams

### **Great Plains Wildfire Compact**

CSFS represents Colorado in the Great Plains Wildfire Compact which includes the states of Wyoming and South Dakota. The Compact allows the states to share resources directly with each other under the terms of the Compact and annual operating plan.

## Assistance to Colorado Wildfire Training Academies

\$40,000 in financial support was granted to the three wildland training institutions which perform a high percentage of the training for local fire departments and volunteers. In addition, \$21,000 in direct financial aid was provided to Colorado Fire Departments to share 50% of the cost for their firefighters to attend wildland training. Three primary training sessions were conducted by the Colorado Incident Management and Wildfire Academy. In total 1626 hours of courses were presented training 606 fire department members and 752 agency employees.

### **Other Technical Assistance and Support:**

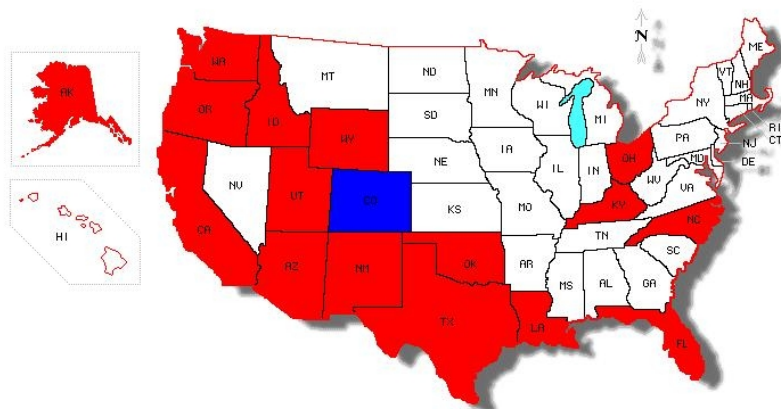
Preparedness funds supported four Fire Management Officers that provide technical assistance to fire departments, county, and federal partners; aid in the listing of local resources in the national dispatch system; provide on scene advice to sheriffs and fire departments; coordinate resource coverage. Technical assistance in prescribed fire and hazard fuels mitigation was made available to cooperators, communities, counties, and federal partners.

CSFS supported the six interagency dispatch centers, the Rocky Mountain Coordination Center, and the Rifle Air Center with operating funds or seasonal dispatchers, ensuring representation of a state and local presence in the zone and regional centers. Provided over \$110,000 in financial support to the Centers, CSFS served as the representative for Colorado's Counties and fire departments for utilization and coordination of local, state, and federal fire suppression resources.

CSFS Fire Equipment Shop provided mechanical support to both the SEAT program and Engine program.

20 CSFS employees, not including the state engine crews, filled 35 fire assignments totaling 78 man-days. 16 states received assistance from Colorado resources provided through CSFS.

CSFS State Assistance 2009



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### **Important Considerations related to Wildfire Preparedness:**

- Wildfires are going to occur. The number, size, and complexity of wildfire incidents vary from year to year and are influenced by weather, fuels, and ignition sources.
- Planning for preparedness considers the variables required for fires to start, the availability of resources supported by other funds or agencies, and the values at risk in Colorado.
- The Preparedness Fund provides consistency in funding over time that allows for efficiencies of scale when contracting for resources and providing technical assistance and operational support.
- The flexibility afforded in the statutory language for rolling over unused portions of the annual fund allotment allows program managers to plan for the worse case scenarios but implement only what is necessary for the immediate fire season.
- The Wildfire Preparedness Fund provides for consistent funding in support of state owned and operated resources.