



Final Report to the General Assembly

Wildfire Matters Review Committee
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Legislative Council Staff

Wildfire Matters Review Committee

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This report is also available online at:

<https://leg.colorado.gov/committees/committeename/2025-regular-session>

Committee Charge

Pursuant to Section 2-3-1602, C.R.S., the committee is charged with reviewing and proposing legislation or other policy changes related to wildfire prevention, mitigation, and related matters, including public safety and forest health issues. In passing Senate Bill 13-082, which created the Wildfire Matters Review Committee, the General Assembly intended for the committee to be a permanent interim committee through which the General Assembly reviews state policies and resources addressing wildfire prevention and mitigation and the successful implementation and execution of such policies.

During the 2018 legislative session, the General Assembly passed [Senate Bill 18-039](#), which repealed obsolete provisions, provided funding for legislative staffing, and extended the repeal date of the committee to September 1, 2025. The committee is repealed as of September 1, 2025; however, members of the committee expressed intent to reestablish the committee through legislation in the 2026 legislative session.

Committee Activities

The committee held four meetings during the 2025 interim which included one field trip to the Department of Public Safety's facility at the Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport. Briefings and presentations were made by government agencies, special interest groups, and members of the public on a wide range of subjects. The following organizations gave briefings and presentations to the committee:

- Boulder Fire Department;
- Center of Excellence;
- Colorado Association of Municipal Utilities;
- Colorado Electric Cooperative;
- Colorado Forest Health Council;
- Colorado State Forest Service;
- Department of Fire Prevention and Control;
- Department of Local Affairs;
- Department of Natural Resources;
- Department of Public Health and Environment;
- Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Response;
- Division of Insurance;
- Public Utilities Commission; and
- Xcel Energy.

The following sections discuss the committee's activities during the 2025 interim.

Public Utility Wildfire Mitigation Plans

Public utilities can cause wildfires through faulty or aging electrical equipment and overgrown vegetation that can become fuel. A number of public utilities organizations presented to the committee on ways in which public utility companies and cooperatives plan to decrease their wildfire impact through their wildfire mitigation plans.

The Colorado Electric Cooperative presented to the committee on the importance of wildfire mitigation, especially with a not-for-profit business model. A single fire could bankrupt a co-op and jeopardize electric service across entire rural communities. Xcel Energy detailed how their 2025-2027 Wildfire Mitigation plan includes employing additional cameras and meteorologists to expand their efforts protecting persons and property. The Colorado Association of Municipal Utilities also presented to the committee about how local community engagement enables them to communicate their wildfire incidents to city customers.

Common strategies across utility companies include removing vegetation, replacing poles with fire-resistant materials, implementing public safety power shut-offs (PSPSs), which turn off lines during critical incidents when appropriate, and moving high-risk lines underground.

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) reviews wildfire mitigation plans as a factor in the approval of utility costs.

Committee recommendations

As a result of its discussions, the committee recommended that a bill on Utility Wildfire Mitigation Plans be drafted, but the draft bill was not approved by the committee. The committee drafted [a letter](#) to stakeholders in the wildfire insurance and utility sectors which communicated the committee's intent to see a comprehensive bill that addresses wildfire liability issues.

Collaboration between Governments

Collaboration is required between all levels of government in order to prepare, react, and respond to a wildfire. The Colorado State Forest Service presented to the committee about changes in agreements between federal and state governments for forest health projects. These agreements allow the Colorado State Forest Service to improve outdoor recreation opportunities.

The committee also heard presentations from municipal firefighting departments and collaborative organizations detailing their incident management responses and process for determining when a wildfire requires additional resources or collaboration between the state and local firefighting departments.

Finally, the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management within the Colorado Department of Public Safety presented to the committee about federal funding changes for emergency management.

Committee recommendations

As a result of its discussions, the committee recommended Bill 1, which reenacts the Wildfire Matters Review Committee for an additional five years. Because the Wildfire Matters Review Committee was repealed on September 1, 2025, this bill will not be introduced in the 2026 legislative session as a committee bill.

As a result of its discussions, the committee recommended Bill 3, which concerns the Good Neighbor Authority agreements between the state and federal government. Because the Wildfire Matters Review Committee was repealed on September 1, 2025, this bill will not be introduced in the 2026 legislative session as a committee bill.

Funding for Grant Programs

Through prior legislation, the state has funded three Fire Prevention and Strategic Action programs managed by the Colorado State Forest Service and the Department of Natural Resources. The Colorado State Forest Service presented to the committee that funds for the Healthy Forests Vibrant Communities program expired on June 30, 2025. Additionally, funding for the Forest Mitigation and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant Program has approximately \$7 million in grant funding for the 2025-26 cycle. These programs fund local firefighting organizations to clear biomass, build piles for prescribed burns, and survey fire risk across forests in Colorado.

Additionally, the Department of Natural Resources updated the committee on activities related to the Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program (COSWAP). Grant activities included workforce development training for firefighters and local organizations, a study of Colorado's Wildfire Ready Watersheds, and strengthening collaboration around wildfire management with the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribes.

The Colorado State Forest Service urged the committee to continue funding for these three grant programs, whose funding future is currently uncertain given the constraints of the state budget; they argued that wildfire prevention efforts will save the state money in the long term by preventing catastrophic loss of property and clean up expenses.

Committee recommendations

As a result of its discussions, the committee requested a bill be drafted to maintain current funding levels for COSWAP, the Healthy Forests Vibrant Communities and Forest Mitigation and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant Programs. However, this bill was withdrawn by the committee.

Mobile Home Safety

Mobile homes are susceptible to wildfires due to close proximity to other mobile homes in parks, fewer exits, and the construction materials used being more flammable and thin, which allows more smoke and fire to enter. There are efforts that can be made to help mitigate the impacts wildfire may have, including hardening the home with fire resistant materials, tempered windows, sturdy roofs, and sealing any gaps.

Committee recommendations

As a result of its discussions, the committee requested a bill be drafted that would have created a study on mobile home fire safety. However, this bill was withdrawn by the committee.

Public Safety and Technology to Fight Wildfires

The committee attended a field trip to Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport on June 25, 2025, to learn more about the state's wildfire emergency response protocols. The committee heard from state agencies involved in creating wildfire emergency response plans and developing technology to fight wildfire more effectively. Committee members toured a S70i FIREHAWK helicopter, along with other aerial vehicles designed for fighting wildfires.

Summary of Recommendations

As a result of the committee's activities, the committee recommended two bills to the Legislative Council for consideration in the 2026 session. However, because the committee repealed before the Legislative Council meeting, these bills will not be introduced in the 2026 session as committee bills, but may be introduced by individual legislators.

Additionally, the committee sent [a letter](#) to stakeholders in the insurance and utility sectors in preparation for future legislation.

Bill 1 – Recreate Wildfire Matters Interim Committee

Under current law, the Wildfire Matters Review Committee repeals on September 1, 2025. The bill continues the committee until June 30, 2031. The bill requires the committee to meet at least twice per year and may take two field trips every interim, though the chair may call additional meetings as necessary for the committee to complete its duties.

Bill 3 – CO State Forest Good Neighbor Authority

The bill clarifies the list of federal agencies covered under the Forest Service's "Good Neighbor Authority" to include the United States Department of the Interior, the United States Department of Agriculture, and any agency within those departments. The bill also allows the Colorado State Forest Service to enter into projects that improve outdoor recreation opportunities.

Resource Materials

Meeting summaries are prepared for each meeting of the committee and contain all handouts provided to the committee. The summaries of meetings and attachments are available at the Division of Archives, 1313 Sherman Street, Denver (303-866-2055). The listing below contains the dates of committee meetings and the topics discussed at those meetings. Meeting summaries are also available on our website at:

<https://leg.colorado.gov/content/committees>

Meetings and Topics Discussed

June 12, 2025

- Wildfire smoke and preparedness in buildings
- Public Utilities wildfire mitigation
- Forest restoration and wildfire risk mitigation
- Future of emergency management funding
- Climate and property insurance
- Colorado Forest Health Council work
- Colorado Strategic Wildlife Action Program
- 2021 Marshall Fire

June 25, 2025

- Field Trip to Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Airport
- Presentation from the Department of Fire Prevention and Control
- Presentation from the Center of Excellence
- Interactive Wildfire Role-Playing Scenario
- Tour of Technology and Equipment

July 15, 2025

- State review of public utilities' wildfire risk mitigation
- Colorado Forest Health Council activity
- Boulder fire department's success with fire mitigation and biomass
- Bill draft requests

August 26, 2025

- Final action on bill draft requests