



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

2020 Fire Season Update

BLM Colorado State Office
July 2020

The BLM manages wildland fire through interagency efforts with several federal, state, county and local firefighting units. Through this interagency team, firefighting resources can be mobilized within 24 hours throughout the country. In Colorado, the BLM has a full cadre of ground and aerial firefighting resources prepositioned for fire readiness.

Fire Season Update

Initial Attack (IA) activity has been moderate across the lower to middle elevations in Colorado. Colorado has had two Type 2 Incident Management Teams mobilized in the past two weeks and several fires have been managed by Type 3 incident management organizations. Aggressive initial attack has been effective in most cases, keeping fires to a few hundred acres or less. As of July 2020, BLM Colorado has had 113 fires for 4,616 acres burned. Most of the acreage burned was in the East Canyon Fire near Cortez, Colorado.

The East Canyon fire was the first fire in Colorado's 2020 fire season to require a Type 2 Incident Management Team. This was the first opportunity to test the plans that had been developed during the spring in response to COVID-19. Employee safety was prioritized and as a result most team members and responders were more spread out in camp and multiple smaller camps were used. The Colorado National Guard was used to conduct volunteer COVID-19 testing to any personal associated with the fire, including support functions personnel. Testing was done in both field and camp locations. Of the 425 individuals offered the test more than 190 were tested. We understand testing limitations and shortcomings exist, but this service demonstrates a commitment to working as a community and taking care of both the public and fire community alike. No tests came back positive.

Seasonal Fire Potential Outlook July through October

With drier than average long-range forecasts and continued intensification of drought in southern and western Colorado, above average large fire risk is predicted to expand from southcentral and southwest Colorado through much of western Colorado in July. The southwest monsoon is not expected to be wetter than average, but surges of limited tropical moisture are predicted to bring the large fire risk back into the average range during the second half of July in southcentral to southwest Colorado, then moderating the fire potential across northwest Colorado by August.

Vegetation and Fuels Program Update

Vegetation and hazardous fuels management treatments such as thinning, mastication, prescribed fires, seeding and biological/chemical control are essential tools for reducing the risk of large wildfires, increasing public and firefighter safety, and helping meet resource management objectives. To date, BLM staff and partners have funded and accomplished more than 10,000 acres of treatments reduce hazardous fuels, restore habitat and complete mitigation objectives. BLM continues to work with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Wild Turkey Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation, and other partners to improve and protect wildlife habitats for sage-grouse and big game species on BLM, state, county, and privately managed lands. This year, BLM Colorado anticipates completing treatments on more than 25,000 acres in Colorado.