

2011 Fire Season

July 13, 2011

This year Colorado experienced an above average fire season compared to last year with most of the fire activity within the eastern part of the state. This trend is expected to slowly decrease and shift toward a more average fire season within southern Colorado through July. Due to a wet spring and early summer, the onset of fire season has been delayed within western Colorado, but is likely to shift upward toward the end of July or early August.

The Bureau of Land Management Colorado was allocated \$12.4 million for fiscal year 2011 for fire preparedness and fuels treatments. The BLM manages wildland fire through interagency efforts that include a number of 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.

The potential for wildland fires grows each year due to aggressive fire suppression during the last 100 years, increased population within fire-prone areas, past land management practices and changing climate. However, the BLM mitigates these risks by educating the public on how to protect their homes, and by following best practices to manage our forested areas.

Seasonal Fire Outlook

- Weakening La Nina conditions will continue for the eastern tropical pacific during the remainder of the summer. This will result in favorable weather patterns such as pulses of southwest monsoon moisture, which is expected to move north into Colorado for the next several weeks.
- After several weeks of significant fire activity within southern Colorado, this monsoon moisture is expected to slowly decrease fire potential to near average through July. With lingering severe drought conditions, fire starts will likely continue across this part of the state, but the risk for new large scale fires will be slowly reduced.
- Above average moisture during the spring and early summer has delayed the onset of fire season across the lower elevations of western Colorado. This part of the state is expected to slowly progress into average fire season conditions by late July or early August. Average conditions for this part of the state include increased fire starts and occasional large fires.
- Lingering snowpack at higher elevations about 7,500 feet will keep fire potential below average.
- Fire potential across Colorado will trend toward average for the remainder of the fire season, except for below average at the higher elevations where lingering winter snowpack and summer monsoon moisture significantly reduces the threat.



BLM Fire Program

- BLM-managed lands within Colorado are broken into six Interagency Fire Management Units.
- Each unit has a Fire Management Officer and staff to plan, oversee and coordinate operations.
- The 10-year average for wildland fires on BLM lands in Colorado is:
 - 493 incidents (human and lightning)
 - 10,621 acres burned annually
- Typically in Colorado, around 10 percent of wildfires on BLM lands are human caused.

Resources:

- BLM Colorado has the following fire suppression resources available within the state:
 - One interagency hot shot crew
 - One wildland fire module
 - 12 Type-6 engines
 - Four Type-4 engines
 - One Initial Attack squad
 - Six Type-2 hand crews
 - Access to 10 “call when needed” aircrafts
 - One helicopter and staff for 90-day contracts
- BLM Colorado has access to 77 national on-call Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs), three Colorado State Forest Service SEATs, seven interagency SEAT re-load bases in the state, and one BLM Large Air Tanker (LAT) base in Grand Junction to support 19 LATs that are managed nationally.
- Nationally, we have 420 smokejumpers. Of those smokejumpers, 150 are BLM employees and the rest are from the United States Forest Service. Grand Junction hosts an annual contingency of smokejumpers through an agreement with the BLM Boise Smokejumpers.
- Nationally, there are more than 100 interagency hot shot crews (IHC). The BLM Craig Hotshot Crew is located in Colorado and became available May 10.
- Nationally, there are four National Incident Management Organizations (NIMO), 16 Interagency Type-1 Incident Management Teams and 53 Type-2 Incident Management Teams available for large and complex fires.
- For fiscal year 2011, BLM Colorado was allocated \$6.8 million for fire preparedness and \$5.6 million for fuels treatments.

2010 Budget Figures:

Suppression \$ 6,773,000

Fuels \$ 6,753,000

Total \$13,526,000

2009 Budget Figures:

Suppression \$ 6,770,000

Fuels \$ 6,662,000

Total \$13,432,000

2010 Hazardous Fuels Treatment Accomplishments by BLM Colorado:

- Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) acres treated 10,821
- Non-WUI 6,722
- **Total acres treated 17,543**