

# 2012 Fire Season

Colorado has experienced above average fire activity statewide since early spring. Spring green-up has been minimal statewide even though the Front Range areas received limited spring moisture. Precipitation and snowpack deficits, dry fuels, above average temperatures and frequent wind events have raised fire concerns statewide for this year's fire season. The state has experienced numerous large fires since March. Many of these fires have been complex in nature, requiring Type 1 and 2 Incident Management Teams. We anticipate increased potential for more complex fires.

The Bureau of Land Management Colorado was allocated \$11.3 million for fiscal year 2012 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*

- Much of Colorado experienced the driest and warmest March on record. This year's winter and early spring weather pattern resulted in reduced snowpack and precipitation, above average temperatures and intensifying drought conditions. Western Colorado experienced the most significant intensification in drought conditions during the last six months with indices in the moderate to severe categories.
- Due to the lack of snowpack and recent precipitation trends, calculated and measured fuel indices have reached a critical level in all portions of Colorado. Fuel conditions have worsened in Colorado even though eastern Colorado received precipitation in April and May. Colorado is currently experiencing moderate to extreme drought across the whole state.
- Current/forecast conditions support a more active fire season across western Colorado compared to 2011. Large fire activity in Colorado thus far has been similar to 2002. Fuels at all elevations will support active to extreme fire behavior. Fires in heavier fuel regimes of Colorado will last longer and require greater variety and numbers of resources. Average fire potential is expected across the remainder of the state.
- If other areas of the country become active with fires, resource competition will become problematic. Fire suppression strategies may need to change due to intense resource competition.

## *BLM Fire Program*

- BLM Colorado lands 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:
  - 472 incidents (human and lightning)
  - 10,446 acres burned annually
- Typically in Colorado, between 10 to 20 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
- Eleven Type-6 engines
- Seven Type-4 engines
- One Initial Attack squad
- Six Type-2 hand crews
- One helicopter and staff for 90-day contract
- One Type-3 SEAT based in Grand Junction for a 60-day contract
- BLM Colorado has access to 77 national on-call Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs), three Colorado State Forest Service SEATs, one BLM exclusive-use SEAT based in Grand Junction, nine interagency SEAT re-load bases in the state, five BLM SEAT bases and one BLM Large Air Tanker (LAT) base in Grand Junction to support 10 LATs that are managed nationally. One Very Large Air Tanker (VLAT) with a 12,000-gallon capacity will be available this year on a call-when-needed basis through the United States Forest Service (USFS). There are also 192 Type-1 and Type-2 helicopters on call-when needed contracts. A BLM National Office-funded exclusive-use Air Attack training platform is based in Grand Junction.
- Nationally, the BLM has 420 smokejumpers. Of those smokejumpers, 150 are BLM employees and the rest are from the USFS. Grand Junction hosts an annual contingency of smokejumpers through an agreement with the BLM Boise Smokejumpers. This resource has been prepositioned at times in Cañon City and Durango.
- Nationally, there are more than 100 interagency hot shot crews (IHC). The BLM Craig Hotshot Crew is located in Colorado and will be available beginning May 7.
- Nationally, there are four National Incident Management Organizations, 16 Interagency Type-1 Incident Management Teams and 53 Type-2 Incident Management Teams available for large and complex fires.
- For fiscal year 2012, BLM Colorado was allocated \$6.4 million for fire preparedness and \$4.9 million for fuels treatments, which totals to \$11.3 million.

**2010 Budget Figures:**

Suppression	\$ 6,773,000
Fuels	\$ 6,753,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 13,526,000</b>

**2011 Budget Figures:**

Suppression	\$ 6,882,000
Fuels	\$ 5,172,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 12,054,000</b>

**2011 Hazardous Fuels Treatment Accomplishments by BLM Colorado:**

- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| • Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) acres treated | 9,023        |
| • Non-WUI acres treated                        | 411          |
| • <b>Total acres treated</b>                   | <b>9,434</b> |