



SB21-054

SHORT TITLE: Transfers for Wildfire Mitigation and Response

LONG TITLE: Concerning transfers from the general fund to cash funds to be used to address wildland fires, and, in connection therewith, making an appropriation.

COMMITTEES: Senate Appropriations Committee and House Appropriations Committee

SPONSORS: JBC

PURPOSE OF THE BILL: To fund mitigation, restoration and recovery from the 2020 wildfires which ravaged portions of Colorado.

PROPONENTS OF THE BILL: The Governor and the JBC

POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS: Water providers and users, water treatment facilities, local governments including special districts, forest health advocates, communities in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

BACKGROUND: The Governor's Budget request for 2021-22 set forth several transfers to support wildfire preparedness, forest and watershed recovery. This bill addresses those requests, in part.

Is this bill necessary this year? Although there is no deadline, Colorado has seen deadly and destructive wildfires that have taken lives, destroyed millions of dollars in property, and devastated forests.

How does the bill change current law? The bill transfers a total of \$13 million from the General Fund including \$6.0 million to the Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant Program Cash Fund; • \$3.0 million to the Wildfire Preparedness Fund, which must be used as the state match for federal wildfire hazard mitigation grants to local governments and for related strategic planning; and • \$4.0 million to the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) Construction Fund, which is appropriated to the board for the Watershed Restoration Program.

Does the bill affect the prior appropriations system? No.

How is the bill implemented? The State Treasurer is directed to transfer the money to the three funds for the following purposes:

Wildfire Preparedness: This fund is administered by the Department of Public Safety. The bill specifies that the funds will be used as the state match for federal wildfire grants, and to support local government strategic planning related to those grants. The federal grants, which are distributed through FEMA, support communities in reducing future fire damage after experiencing wildfires. The cash fund is continuously appropriated.

Forest Restoration and Wildfire Mitigation Grants. Administered by the Colorado State Forest Service housed in the Department of Higher Education. The program primarily issues grants to reduce hazardous fuels, such as dead trees, to reduce the potential risk for wildlife damage to property, infrastructure, or water supplies. The program's cash fund is continuously appropriated.

Watershed Restoration: Administered by the Colorado Water Conservation Board in the Department of Natural Resources. The program issues grants to support planning and implementation for watershed restoration.

Practical considerations: N/A

Fiscal Impact: \$13 million from the General Fund.

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