

Colorado Fire Commission (CFC)

JUNE 12, 2025

Meeting Summary

Attendance

In-person Participants:

Commission members: Bryce Boyer, Jim Candelaria, Lesley Dahlkemper, Pam Feely, Hugo Ferchau, Desmond Fulton, John Hansen (representing Curtis Hartenstine), Tyko Isaacson, Sean Jewell, Vaughn Jones, Christina Burri (representing Matt McCombs), Mike Morgan, Mark Novak, Alec Oughton, Brett Powell, Jess Solze, Scott Sugg, Scott Sugg, Jeremy Taylor, Sarah Thorsteinson, and Carole Walker

Online Participants:

Commission members: Nathan Fogg, Connie Johnson, Kevin Klein, Jay Lusher, Sean Smith, and Bob Sullivan

Facilitation and Support Team:

Dominique Ashe, Heather Bergman, and Katie Lobodzinski

Approved Meeting Minutes from April 10, 2025

The Colorado Fire Commission (Fire Commission) approved the summary from the April 2025 meeting with an amendment to correct substantive language on page 13. Under Recommendation 25-C, the reference to “WUI data commons” will replace “WUI insurance.”

Legislative Updates

Mike Morgan, Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) Director; and Christina Burri, Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) Deputy Director, provided an update on legislative and federal matters. Highlights of their updates are summarized below.

- Tight budgets are anticipated in the coming years. This will likely create pressure on funding for fire-related initiatives.
- There is a need for strong advocacy from the Fire Commission to ensure continued legislative awareness, support, and funding. While actions within the Fire Service (e.g., mutual aid agreements) are impactful, legislators may not consider them priorities unless commissioners articulate collective fire service needs to lawmakers.

- Recent years have shown strong legislative support for firefighter safety and mental health, including \$5 million in direct grants from the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) and the creation of the Firefighter Behavioral Health Trust Fund through [SB 22-003](#). The bill's funding was shortened from nine years to three and has now expired, leaving no clear plan to sustain these critical services. Continued advocacy is needed to restore or replace this funding, which supports firefighters in smaller departments. Otherwise, the Fire Service may lose momentum and programs.

Current State Bills

- **Food truck operations and manufactured housing regulations:** Both the Food Truck Operations Bill ([HB25-1295](#)) and the Regional Building Codes for Factory-Built Structures, commonly referred to as the “manufactured housing” Bill ([SB25-002](#)) pose setbacks to providing appropriate protection from a fire agency perspective.
- **Continuing forestry and wildfire workforce:** The Forestry and Wildfire Mitigation Workforce Bill ([SB23-005](#)) funding is uncertain and depends on continued legislative support.
- **Immunity for egress:** The Landowner Immunity for Emergency Access to Property Bill ([HB25-1053](#)) has no fiscal impacts and passed.
- **Pilot program with Lockheed Martin:** The Legislature cut the proposed bill to allocate \$7.5 million to fund a multi-aircraft mission fuels modeling mapping [pilot program](#).
- **District-level vegetation fuels mitigation programs:** The Vegetative Fuel Mitigation Bill ([HB25-1009](#)) passed and was signed by the Governor on March 31, 2025. It allows fire protection districts to establish mitigation programs across their districts and assess and fine private properties that do not reduce fuel accumulation. Fire departments are deciding on how to implement this bill.
- **Changes to the Wildfire Resiliency Code Board (WRCB):** Proposed changes to the WRCB in [Senate Bill 25-142](#) generated confusion, particularly around statutory language and implementation timelines. Originally, local governments could adopt the wildland-urban interface (WUI) code within 90 days of the Code Board's adoption. However, stakeholders including Colorado Counties Inc. (CCI) and Colorado county commissioners raised concerns about the feasibility of this timeline. An amendment to SB25-142 allowed local governments an additional nine months to adopt the code after state adoption.
- **Prescribed fire backstop:** The Increase Prescribed Burns Bill ([SB25-007](#)) passed with a starting claims fund of \$4 million and a full-time equivalent (FTE) position. This bill acts as a liability backstop for Colorado Certified Burner (CCB) or National Wildfire Coordination Group (NWCG) certified burners. This bill was a direct recommendation from the Fire Commission. It shows the value of the Commission's unified voice in advocating for state-level wildfire threat mitigation.
- **Wildfire Matters Review Committee (WMRC):** The WMRC is considered an 'interim committee' that meets during the summer months when the Legislature is not in

session. Due to budget constraints and statutory requirements, the WMRC will officially sunset on July 1, 2025. However, the Fire Commission could advocate for the reinstatement of the WMRC. The WMRC is hosting two meetings on June 12 and 25. As part of the second meeting, participants will tour the DFPC Broomfield facility where its Firehawk 1 helicopter is located. The WMRC will present on how fire-related issues are being addressed holistically from different perspectives.

CSFS Updates

- CSFS is currently conducting outreach to partners with federal congressional delegates. CSFS would appreciate additional support from Fire Commission members in engaging with federal delegates. Christina Burri will send a legislative letter template to Katie Lobodzinski for distribution to all Fire Commission members.
- In light of the President's proposed 'skinny budget' suggesting a 36 percent cut to CSFS funding, the agency is preparing multiple budget scenarios to adjust its operations and programs accordingly.
- On June 17, CSFS will be touring some of the Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation (FRWRM) and Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program (COSWAP) projects. CSFS receives State budget allocations through Colorado State University (CSU) and for specific programs under the Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR). While CSFS has experienced small cuts to its operating budget it is currently waiting for final decisions on overall State budget allocations.

Federal Update: Presentation on the Future of Emergency Management Funding and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Kevin Klein, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) Director, presented anticipated changes to federal emergency management funding and FEMA under the current administration. Highlights of his presentation are summarized below.

- **Shift of emergency management responsibility to states:** The Trump administration has initiated a policy direction to reassign primary responsibility for emergency management from the federal government to individual states. This shift may involve replacing FEMA with a yet-to-be-defined structure. This approach could result in increased responsibility for disaster response, recovery, and mitigation planning at the state and local levels.
- **Structural changes to the FEMA Review Commission:** The Commission was established by [Executive Order 14180](#) and held its first public meeting in May 2025. Co-chaired by Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Noem and Defense Secretary Hegseth, the Commission is required to submit a final report by November 16, 2025. Key changes under consideration include raising the thresholds for disaster declarations, lowering the federal cost-share from 90–100 percent to 75 percent, potentially excluding

snowstorms from eligible disaster types, and altering the Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) approval process. FEMA has lost around 2,000 staff so far creating leadership and operational gaps and raising concerns about how future interagency coordination will function under this new structure.

- **Changes to disaster thresholds and their impact on Colorado:** Colorado may see its disaster cost threshold increase from \$11 million to between \$43 million and \$54 million in uninsured public losses to qualify for a presidential disaster declaration. Without such declarations, funding for emergency post-fire mitigation may be unavailable, which could impact recovery timelines and response planning. Colorado is expected to rely more heavily on mutual aid through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). Colorado is an 'Enhanced State,' a designation held by only a few states. These states exceed national standards in mitigation planning, which could provide administrative flexibility.
- **Congressional efforts to reform FEMA:** Multiple bipartisan bills are under consideration in Congress to reform FEMA. These include proposals to return FEMA to Cabinet-level independence (as it was prior to 9/11), implement sliding cost-share systems to incentivize mitigation, expand permanent housing repair programs, streamline regulatory reviews, and allow states to opt into block grant models for greater flexibility.
- **Federal funding disruptions and legal actions:** On January 27, 2025, the current administration froze fiscal year (FY)21–FY24 emergency preparedness and mitigation grants, including wildfire-related programs. States challenged the freeze in court and won a temporary restraining order (TRO). They eventually secured the release of previously awarded funds. FEMA has not yet issued its FY25 notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) for preparedness grants, putting approximately \$23.7 million at risk of non-renewal.
- **Pending Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) status:** The EMPG currently supports 24 state and 55 local emergency management positions in Colorado., DHSEM delayed spending to manage funding gaps. It also reallocated expenses to other funding sources, creating a \$2.4 million buffer. Without renewed federal support, local emergency programs have been notified that they may lose funding after September 30, 2025.
- **"Sanctuary Jurisdiction" legal challenges:** New terms attached to federal grant awards related to immigration enforcement triggered two lawsuits in May 2025. While litigation continues, DHS has clarified that several core FEMA programs (e.g., Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAG) and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs (HMGP)) are not subject to these new immigration-related conditions.
- Katie Lobodzinski will distribute the federal emergency management funding and FEMA slide deck to the Fire Commission.

Other Federal Updates

- **Formation of a National Wildland Firefighting Service:** All indicators suggest that the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) will consolidate and create a national wildland firefighting service under the DOI. A draft executive order supporting this initiative was released a few months ago. Official documents supporting this move may be released as early as today. Colorado discovered in 2012 that streamlining coordination significantly improved wildfire response.
- **Shortage of Incident Management Teams (IMTs) ahead of the wildfire season:** The Colorado Governor's wildfire briefing highlighted the creation of official wildfire roles within the USDA and DOI, as well as possible budget cuts affecting IMTs. The second half of the wildfire season may be particularly difficult due to shrinking resources and the loss of secondary-duty personnel.
- There have also been several deferred resignations. Agencies like the USFS, are working to bring back experienced personnel either as full-time fire staff or IMTs.
- Weather conditions are relatively stable in several western states, but southwest Colorado faces heightened wildfire risk. Colorado agencies are taking proactive steps to build a strong statewide wildfire response capacity (e.g., aviation resources and IMTs). Colorado is also strengthening partnerships through interstate compacts.
- Federal-level agency focus is shifting to a renewed commitment to regional and inter-agency coordination. Agency leaders like Scott Sugg (USFS) and Tyko Isaacson (Bureau of Land Management (BLM)) have made notable contributions while navigating internal changes.

Comments on Legislative Updates

- Cuts to federal emergency management funds are being passed on to local governments. A recent example is in Eagle County where commissioners are responding by shifting funds from wildfire mitigation into emergency management.
- Statewide concerns persist about the feasibility of implementing federal fuel mitigation regulations in Colorado due to the lack of a timber industry.
- The BLM at the highest level is focused on communication and planning, particularly around long-term recovery and the involvement of water providers.

Wildfire Resiliency Code Board (WRCB) Update

Carrie Larsen, WRCB Administrator, provided meeting participants with an update on the WRCB. Her update is summarized below.

- The next WRCB meeting is scheduled for June 27, 2025, in Denver, with the location still to be finalized. It will begin with a public hearing on the draft rules from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM, followed by the regular meeting from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. The regular meeting will address any changes to the draft rules, including the timeline for the local

extension under the [142 amendment](#). They will determine the processes for writing a report on program activities and identifying jurisdictions in or out of compliance.

- An official public hearing on the rules will be held on Tuesday, July 1, 2025. On this date, the Board will formally adopt the code, the rules, and the accompanying map. This date marks the official adoption by the State.
- A three-year update cycle for the 2028 code will begin, with a focus on identifying best management practices and pain points before proposing any changes.
- The Board will create an adoption and implementation toolkit, which will include template resources for local jurisdictions. Feedback on this effort is welcome.
- DFPC and the Colorado Resiliency Office are hosting a peer exchange roundtable beginning this August to enable local jurisdictions to share successful strategies. An introductory live webinar is scheduled to take place on July 16, 2025, with the exact time still to be finalized.
- The 2025 code commentary process is underway. It will function similarly to the International Code Council (ICC) code commentary process, providing detailed explanations and intent for specific sections and subsections. This is a larger, ongoing effort, and chapters will be shared as they are completed.
- Additional engagement opportunities include a presentation at the Colorado Municipal League (CML) on June 25, 2025, featuring an overview of the code and a demonstration of the map and related resources. Another event will take place on September 12, 2025, during the Colorado Association of Code Enforcement Officials (CACEO) training in Boulder. This session will provide another overview of the code and outline the requirements for compliance.
- The WRCB aims to wrap up the first iteration of this process by July 1, 2025.

Decision: Commissioners in attendance agreed to receive quarterly presentations on the WRCB.

Questions Regarding the WRCB Update

Commissioners asked Carrie Larsen clarifying questions regarding the WRCB update. Their questions are written below in italics. Corresponding answers follow in plain text.

What were some key themes from the public feedback process, and how were they integrated into the proposed code?

Key concerns included how governing bodies are defined and how adoption and enforcement would work. Both depend on local legal interpretation. Enforcement remains the responsibility of individual jurisdictions. The WRCB will not prescribe who enforces the code or how often. The requirement for evaluations every three years was removed due to pushback.

Suggestions for enforcement were received but fall outside the Board's authority and will be explored in a peer exchange roundtable. Comments also addressed material use—vinyl fencing

and siding are allowed only when fire-resistance standards (e.g., one-hour protection) are met. A consultation with the Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) confirmed that vinyl can be cost-effective when used properly. Concerns were also raised about the code not covering existing buildings.

Feedback on the map included concerns that some areas were classified as having a low fire hazard, despite local experiences indicating otherwise. The map focuses on current and potential WUI areas, excluding dense urban zones. The Board created a half-mile “area of identified risk” buffer zone because there was no scientific support for selective boundary expansion. This zone may be regulated but is not automatically subject to the code.

Overview of Changes to the Commission Bylaws and Process Review

Katie Lobodzinski, DFPC Administrator, briefed the Fire Commission on proposed amendments to the Fire Commission Bylaws brought forth by Commission members Bryce Boyer, KC Hume, and Alec Oughton. Highlights of her overview are summarized below.

The Commissioners are proposing five amendments to the Commission’s bylaws to enhance clarity, efficiency, and alignment with current practices. Those changes include:

- Updating the language to accommodate virtual meeting participation
- Empowering Commission staff to coordinate subcommittee membership, a responsibility that currently falls solely on the chair and vice chair, which has become impractical given the existence of over 60 subcommittees
- Clarifying the roles in subcommittee and task force planning, particularly regarding who sets the scope and how initial objectives and timelines are established
- Removing language granting voting authority to subcommittees, reflecting current practice
- Adding a provision requiring regular bylaw reviews

Discussion on the Proposed Changes to the Bylaws and Process Review

Commissioners discussed the Fire Commission bylaws and proposed amendments. Highlights of their discussion are summarized below.

- The bylaws are available on the CFC website.
- While the bylaws are formal governing documents, the supporting processes and procedures are more flexible and informal in nature.
- The Commission’s processes and protocols document may also need revision.

- A Commissioner suggested referring to Commission members by their first names rather than their titles to create a more human-centered approach to the quarterly meetings.

Decision: Bryce Boyer motioned to adopt all five changes to the bylaws. Brett Powell seconded the motion. Through a roll call vote, Commission members approved the amendments to the bylaws. The results of the roll call vote are shown in the table below. Katie Lobodzinski will share the updated bylaws with the Fire Commission.

Type of Vote	Voting Members
In favor	Bryce Boyer, Jim Candelaria, Lesley Dahlkemper, Pam Feely, Hugo Ferchau, Nathan Fogg, Desmond Fulton, KC Hume, Sean Jewell, Connie Johnson, Vaughn Jones, Kevin Klein, Mike Morgan, Mark Novak, Alec Oughton, Brett Powell, Sean Smith, and Jess Solze
Against	None
Abstained	None
Absent	Dan Gibbs, Stan Hilkey, Matt McCombs, Brett Schroetlin, Scott Trainor, and Kevin Whelan

Decision: Commissioners in attendance agreed that the same Commission members (Bryce Boyer, KC Hume, and Alec Oughton) who reviewed the bylaws will review and simplify voting protocols and update outdated guidance related to the Legislative Subcommittee.

Decision: Commissioners in attendance agreed to refer to one another by first names. This style of decorum will be incorporated into the process and protocols document.

Overview: Establishing a State Fire Marshal

Mike Morgan, DFPC Director, provided meeting participants with an overview of the possibility of establishing a Colorado State Fire Marshal. Highlights of his remarks are summarized below.

- The idea of creating a State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) was historically dismissed. However, the stakeholder engagement of the DFPC strategic planning process revealed

new interest in the concept. From that process, the DFPC Strategic Plan included two key outcomes: the establishment of a SFMO and the creation of COFIRE. COFIRE was originally introduced in the 2018 DFPC strategic planning process. It envisions a unified state fire agency, with a focus on how the DFPC can support local fire agencies.

- The emphasis of this idea is less on the name of the agency and more on the programs and functions that would fall under its structure. COFIRE would focus on response support, while the State Fire Marshal's Office would handle codes, standards, and investigations.
- There are differing opinions among the Fire Service about what these initiatives should look like. It will be critical for Commissioners to clearly define what these two developments mean to them when they express support for or opposition to these actions.
- A question for Commissioners is whether the Fire Commission should guide this effort or if DFPC should lead it. Since DFPC works for the Fire Commission, it seems fitting for the Fire Commission to take the lead in this initiative.

Clarifying Questions Regarding a State Fire Marshal

Meeting participants ask Mike clarifying questions about the possibility of a State Fire Marshal. Questions are indicated below in italics. Corresponding responses are noted in plain text.

What reasons were previously discussed for not having a State Fire Marshal?

Local control (home-rule) has historically been the primary governing approach of Colorado. However, the State now offers more resources to assist local governments. Previously, there were no statewide regulations or policies in place, but that changed beginning in 1991. Statewide regulations suggest the need for an entity to unify those regulations statewide.

What does having a State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) mean from DFPC's perspective?

The creation of a SFMO typically signifies more than just a name change. It can represent a structural or organizational shift aimed at addressing specific statewide fire-related challenges. The SFMO may provide a more centralized approach to fire prevention, code enforcement, and coordination across jurisdictions.

Is the establishment of an SFMO meant to address a particular problem?

Yes. In many cases, the creation of an SFMO is a response to gaps in coordination, regulation, or resource distribution related to fire safety and prevention. It may also address increasing risks such as wildfires and the need for consistent statewide standards.

Does DFPC already have the capacity to fulfill the SFMO's functions without creating a new title or office?

This is a key consideration. If DFPC already has the necessary authority, staffing, and infrastructure, then establishing a separate SFMO might be redundant. However, formalizing the role through a distinct title or office could help clarify responsibilities and improve visibility and accountability.

Are there recent examples of states creating an SFMO?

Yes, Hawaii recently established a SFMO. There is a trend among states recognizing the importance of a centralized authority for fire prevention and response.

Discussion: Establishing a State Fire Marshal

Meeting participants discussed the opportunity and need for establishing a Colorado State Fire Marshal and COFIRE agency. Highlights of their discussion are summarized below.

- The Fire Commission has successfully advanced recommendations that improved safety through collaboration. Now is the right time to define key challenges and pursue practical solutions given recent wildfire events.
- The Commission should clearly identify the problems COFIRE would address, such as staffing gaps in rural fire protection districts. Many rely on volunteers who need support. A subcommittee could evaluate how similar models work in other states and whether Colorado should develop one. This is a decision about whether to explore the idea, not how to implement it.
- Sheriffs have historically coordinated fire response in rural areas. While this works well in some counties, delays in others reveal inconsistencies. COFIRE could ensure equitable access to resources while respecting successful local systems. Any new model should support existing sheriff–chief partnerships.
- Electric utilities face challenges in coordinating with fire agencies. As power shut-offs increase, clearer contact points and communication channels are essential. A central structure could fill that need. Insurance companies also prefer centralized coordination.
- The purpose of a SFMO often includes safety code adoption, enforcement, public education, and advisory roles—functions that DFPC and the Fire Commission already perform. DFPC has historically fulfilled the role of the SFMO. Instead of establishing a new position, it should focus on establishing clear jurisdiction and a unified fire code.
- The SFMO could serve as a resource for the Legislature and would not supersede the authority of local fire departments. The SFMO and COFIRE would not alter the existing wildfire commission or model; these are complementary, not mutually exclusive.

- A subcommittee could study the tradeoffs of a SFMO and a COFIRE model, what issues they solve in other states, and how Colorado might structure one. The Commission's job today is to decide whether to pursue these initiatives, not how to implement them.

Decision: Commissioner Alec Oughton made a motion to establish a subcommittee to evaluate the problems related to both initiatives (SFMO and COFIRE), identify the challenges of not having them, and weigh the tradeoffs. Commissioner Desmond Fulton seconded the motion. Through a roll-call vote, the Commissioners approved the creation of an SFMO and COFIRE Subcommittee. The results of the roll call vote are shown in the table below.

Type of Vote	Voting Members
In favor	Bryce Boyer, Jim Candelaria, Lesley Dahlkemper, Pam Feely, Hugo Ferchau, Desmond Fulton, KC Hume, Sean Jewell, Connie Johnson, Vaughn Jones, Mike Morgan, Mark Novak, Alec Oughton, Brett Powell, and Jess Solze
Against	Nathan Fogg
Abstained	None
Absent	Dan Gibbs, Stan Hilkey, Kevin Klein, Matt McCombs, Brett Schroetlin, Sean Smith, Scott Trainor, and Kevin Whelan

Katie Lobodzinski will coordinate the SFMO and COFIRE Subcommittee meetings. Fire Commission members are encouraged to participate.

Subcommittee Updates and Recommendations

The Fire Commission heard updates from several subcommittees. Below are the highlights from the updates and discussions.

Prescribed Fire

Katie Lobodzinski, DFPC Administrator, provided an update on the Prescribed Fire Subcommittee's work to date. Her update is summarized below.

- The Prescribed Fire Subcommittee has started work on the prescribed fire implementation plan. The first step involves breaking down each strategy into sub-steps and identifying dependencies and responsible authorities.
- The Subcommittee is working on determining the proper sequence for implementing stakeholder-specific actions.
- Representation from DFPC and CSFS has increased because many of the planned actions fall under their responsibilities. Rocco Snart and Daniel Beveridge will continue to serve as the Subcommittee's chairs. There is also active engagement with the Colorado Prescribed Fire Council to enhance collaboration.
- A meeting with DFPC's Wildland Section may lead to the formation of an internal DFPC working group to improve internal coordination.
- The next Prescribed Fire Subcommittee meeting is planned for July.

Insurance

Mark Novak, Vail Fire, and Carole Walker, Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association (RMIIA), provided an update on the Insurance Subcommittee's efforts and draft recommendations for the Fire Commission to vote on approval. Their update is summarized below, and the language of the [draft recommendations is available through this link](#).

- The Fire Commission identified the nexus between wildfire mitigation and insurability. It stood up the Insurance Subcommittee six months ago to discuss the impacts of insurance on Colorado communities.
- Colorado has one of the highest insurance markets in the nation, and 20 percent of homeowners do not have insurance. The future goals of this partnership between fire protection and the insurance industry are to enable communities to afford insurance alongside other expenses.
- The insurance industry's modeling framework demonstrates that economic incentives can effectively encourage wildfire mitigation not only at the individual parcel level but also at a broader scale. This is especially important given that the nature of wildfire has changed dramatically in recent years and is expected to continue evolving.
- Some of the Subcommittee's recommendations are not just about immediate needs or short-term fixes. Instead, they focus on long-term resilience, such as expanding the

applicability of the WUI code over the next 25 years. This forward-looking approach presents an opportunity to move beyond the traditional annual planning cycle and begin making decisions that prepare communities for decades ahead.

- The Subcommittee found common ground in recognizing the fragility of the property insurance market. One key to restoring stability is sending a clear signal to both insurers and reinsurers that there is a viable path forward. Fire chiefs are positioned to help communicate this message, promoting collaboration across sectors.
- Efforts are underway to advance a WUI alignment project that is supported by the Western Fire Chiefs Association. The development of a shared “data commons” has been identified as a promising tool for aligning stakeholders—including the insurance industry—on consistent information and shared goals. The Subcommittee is aiming to establish clear strategic tracks and goals for the next three to five years.
- Insurance companies are already aware of these recommendations and actions. Providing communities with a clear roadmap not only supports stronger legislation and improved grant opportunities but also helps lay the groundwork for long-term wildfire resilience and insurance stability.

Recommendation 25-C: Endorse a Collaborative WUI Data Commons Pilot Project

- The initiative offers a no-cost, voluntary opportunity to better understand how insurers value wildfire mitigation without creating new mandates. It complements ([HB 25-1182](#)) and has received strong support from stakeholders.
- Insurance modelers have said they would use this type of data if it were available, reinforcing its potential impact. Public feedback about privacy and mandates presents a valuable opportunity to craft clear, reassuring messaging and strengthen alignment with other subcommittee goals.

Decision: Commissioner Hugo Ferchau motioned to move the recommendation to a vote. Pam Feely seconded the motion. Through a roll call vote, Commissioners unanimously approved recommendation 25-C. The results of the roll call vote are shown in the table below.

Type of Vote	Voting Members
In favor	Bryce Boyer, Jim Candelaria, Lesley Dahlkemper, Pam Feely, Hugo Ferchau, Nathan Fogg, Desmond Fulton, Sean Jewell, Connie Johnson, Vaughn Jones, Mike Morgan, Mark Novak, Alec Oughton, Brett Powell, Sean Smith, and Jess Solze

Against	None
Abstained	None
Absent	Dan Gibbs, Stan Hilkey, KC Hume, Kevin Klein, Matt McCombs, Brett Schroetlin, Scott Trainor, and Kevin Whelan

Recommendation 25-D: Support the Western Fire Chiefs Association (WFCA) WUI Insurance Alignment Pilot Project

- This initiative originated from the WFCA and received funding from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. Its primary goal is to bring together the right stakeholders to agree on what truly matters in wildfire mitigation, to establish greater certainty around insurance coverage and cost.
- A central focus of this effort is reaching agreement on the specific mitigation measures that make a meaningful difference.
- The group ultimately agreed that the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) sets the most credible and research-backed standard for wildfire mitigation. Other wildfire preparedness frameworks largely build upon the IBHS model, further reinforcing its legitimacy.
- The project is entering a pilot phase, working with communities not just at the parcel or individual property level, but more importantly, at the broader community level. The idea is that wildfire safety is collective—“you’re only as safe as your neighbor”—and that communities can achieve a form of “herd immunity” through widespread mitigation.
- By endorsing this effort, the Fire Commission is not mandating action but simply expressing support for the standard and the direction of the work. The long-term goal is to expand this participation and impact to a larger scale across more communities.

Questions Regarding Recommendation 25-D

Commission members asked Mark and Carole clarifying questions regarding Recommendation 25-D. Their questions are indicated below in italics. Corresponding responses are shown in plain text.

Will this recommendation conflict with the WUI Code Board?

The WUI Code Board focuses on new construction, while this pilot program is designed for existing communities. The mitigation practices outlined in the Wildfire Prepared Home standard are generally less expensive and more applicable to existing homes. As we move forward, a

clearer distinction will be needed between standards for new development and the existing built environment. For example, brand-new developments will not significantly impact wildfire risk for another decade. This pilot focuses on urban conflagration risks and presents an opportunity for the WUI Code Board to better align with community-level mitigation efforts. The initiative is aspirational, aiming to achieve our desired state 15 years from now to make a meaningful difference. Participation by pilot communities is entirely voluntary.

At scale, if tax credits and grants are recommended, what happens if one's neighbor does not want to mitigate, or if residents are low-income—how do we address those types of situations?

Participation in the pilot is voluntary. A successful grant program must accompany any mitigation initiative to ensure accessibility. The pilot could potentially be funded through private companies. One of the biggest concerns is how housing insurance will respond to low-income households that cannot afford mitigation, especially as losing insurance can also jeopardize mortgage eligibility. There are two key components to consider:

- Insurance companies currently operate in a “black box,” but the WUI alignment and mitigation agreements could help establish standards that are likely to maintain or secure coverage.
- Wildfire and insurance issues are fundamentally housing issues. Low-income individuals who lose their homes to wildfire often struggle to recover. Wildfire is increasingly contributing to broader housing insecurity.

This effort is about preparing for the future. While tax credits and grants may not be immediately available, developing a set of “shovel-ready” mitigation projects positions communities to act when funding opportunities arise. It is a proactive strategy for long-term resilience.

Is there any discussion about disincentivizing those who fail to mitigate, especially if it contributes to urban conflagration? If we cannot incentivize, can we at least establish liability rules?

No, there has not been a discussion about formal economic disincentives. The primary disincentive currently is the loss of insurance coverage.

Comments on Recommendation 25-D

- This alignment effort sends a clear signal to reinsurers that there is a structured path forward, which may encourage them to take on more risk and help loosen the currently constrained insurance market.
- There has been a shift in the perception of the WUI; while it was originally associated primarily with forested areas, insurance companies are now identifying WUI zones in grassland regions as well, particularly in the aftermath of the Marshall Fire.

- Insurance companies participating in this effort will be required to verify wildfire mitigation efforts using standards developed by the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS).
- In Jefferson County, mitigation specialists have helped build momentum for this work. Strong local relationships have proven valuable, and the team is proceeding carefully with messaging for the beta test. The goal is to gather data and build capacity, using this effort as a template for broader implementation.

Decision: Commissioner Jim Candelaria motioned to vote on approving the recommendation. Commissioner Lesley Dahlkemper seconded the motion. Through a roll call vote, Commission members approved Recommendation 25-D. The results of the roll call vote are shown in the table below.

Type of Vote	Voting Members
In favor	Bryce Boyer, Jim Candelaria, Lesley Dahlkemper, Pam Feely, Hugo Ferchau, Nathan Fogg, Desmond Fulton, Sean Jewell, Connie Johnson, Vaughn Jones, Mike Morgan, Mark Novak, Alec Oughton, Brett Powell, Sean Smith, and Jess Solze
Against	None
Abstained	None
Absent	Dan Gibbs, Stan Hilkey, KC Hume, Kevin Klein, Matt McCombs, Brett Schroetlin, Scott Trainor, and Kevin Whelan

Recommendation 25-E: Enlist the Wildfire Resiliency Code Board to Analyze the Establishment of a WUI Code for Existing Buildings

- The current tools available—such as education, peer pressure, and grant funding—will only have a limited effect in driving widespread wildfire mitigation. Even when individual homes take protective measures, their proximity to other, unmitigated homes still poses a significant risk. While the WUI Code has already been passed, there is an opportunity to approach the issue more holistically and consider broader strategies for risk reduction.

- Any new proposal related to expanding or adjusting mitigation requirements may be difficult to pass. The WUI Code Board is expected to take considerable time to debate and implement any changes thoroughly.
- The recommendation leverages existing expertise and increasing public and institutional acceptance of wildfire mitigation practices to explore what future efforts could look like under the evolving WUI Code framework.
- The recommendation also considers the specific challenges associated with newly built homes and encourages thoughtful consideration of how mitigation practices should be applied to existing homes.
- To foster agreement, common ground language was adopted to frame the recommendation as aspirational, rather than mandatory, with the goal of uniting stakeholders around a shared vision for long-term wildfire resilience.

Questions Regarding Recommendation 25-E

Commission members asked Mark and Carole clarifying questions regarding Recommendation 25-E. Their questions are indicated below in italics. Corresponding responses are shown in plain text.

Many of the WUI Code discussions have focused on communities, but how do these recommendations apply to homes on 500-acre properties?

Currently, a 35-acre exemption is in place. If a single home on a large property burns, it typically does not contribute significantly to the broader insurance crisis. The real concern lies in densely built areas where fire can spread quickly between structures. A home on 500 acres is more likely to fall under the exemption and is not the primary driver of insurance-related challenges.

Comments on Recommendation 25-E

- Non-monetary efforts, such as education and volunteer participation, are essential. However, it is also important to be mindful of the capacity and burden placed on individuals and communities. Balancing effectiveness with feasibility is key.
- The language used in this context is important because it states that the recommendation “establishes a standard,” rather than implying that the Fire Service will implement it immediately. This distinction helps clarify the intent and timing of the proposed action.
- The specific wording—“analyzing impacts and timelines”—is significant, as it conveys a thoughtful and phased approach to implementation, rather than an immediate or reactive response.

Decision: Commissioner Alec Oughton motioned to vote on approving the recommendation. Commissioner Pam Feely seconded the motion. Through a roll call vote, Commission members approved Recommendation 25-E. The results of the roll call vote are shown in the table below.

Type of Vote	Voting Members
In favor	Bryce Boyer, Jim Candelaria, Lesley Dahlkemper, Pam Feely, Hugo Ferchau, Desmond Fulton, KC Hume, Sean Jewell, Connie Johnson, Vaughn Jones, Mike Morgan, Mark Novak, Alec Oughton, Brett Powell, Sean Smith, and Jess Solze
Against	Nathan Fogg
Abstained	None
Absent	Dan Gibbs, Stan Hilkey, Kevin Klein, Matt McCombs, Brett Schroetlin, Scott Trainor, and Kevin Whelan

Recommendation 25-F: Develop a Statewide Strategic Communications Plan Regarding Insurance Challenges and Solutions

- The Insurance Subcommittee recognizes that messaging, identifying target audiences, and finding effective ways to elevate messaging are critical to overcoming challenges. Highlighting and supporting the communities that are voluntarily participating in wildfire mitigation efforts would be a great opportunity.
- A key aspect of this recommendation is that it links the Subcommittee's recommendations to the larger statewide insurance landscape. This makes the identification of targeted audiences especially important—focusing on individuals and groups who are trusted within their local communities—and emphasizes the need to deliver timely and accurate information.
- As the national context around wildfire and insurance continues to shift, local communities are facing increasing burdens. It is essential to clarify that participation in these programs is voluntary and to address specific concerns, such as the privacy of data sharing and fears of being penalized for non-compliance. The Subcommittee wants to continue identifying and defining the next phase of its work to maintain momentum and ensure consistency across the insurance industry and fire service.

- The Subcommittee is also working to explain how its strategies interact with existing legislation and policy. A major priority is ensuring that Fire Chiefs' recommendations align with other relevant policy efforts across all levels of government. The Subcommittee is compiling and referencing the necessary resources to support this integration.

Comments on Recommendation 25-F

- This is already a strong initiative, especially since Firewise and IBHS are actively working together. While the Fire Chiefs are engaged in broader wildfire mitigation efforts, ongoing community education remains a key component.
- Realtors are particularly enthusiastic about the idea of a communication plan. They appreciate the value of consistent, well-crafted messaging that they can share with clients.

Decision: Commissioner Jim Candelaria motioned to vote on approving the recommendation. Commissioner Pam Feely seconded the motion. Through a roll call vote, Commission members approved Recommendation 25-F. The results of the roll call vote are shown in the table below.

Type of Vote	Voting Members
In favor	Bryce Boyer, Jim Candelaria, Lesley Dahlkemper, Pam Feely, Hugo Ferchau, Nathan Fogg, Desmond Fulton, Sean Jewell, Connie Johnson, Vaughn Jones, Mike Morgan, Mark Novak, Alec Oughton, Brett Powell, Sean Smith, and Jess Solze
Against	None
Abstained	None
Absent	Dan Gibbs, Stan Hilkey, KC Hume, Kevin Klein, Matt McCombs, Brett Schroetlin, Scott Trainor, and Kevin Whelan

Recommendation 25-G: Conduct a Wildfire Standards of Cover (WSOC) Analysis

- There is no current standard for determining what constitutes a minimum threshold for safe and effective wildfire suppression response.

- This recommendation suggests understanding current statewide capabilities and resource levels and then establishing criteria for minimum response times to wildfires.

Questions Regarding Recommendation 25-G

Commissioners asked Mark and Carole clarifying questions about Recommendation 25-G. Their questions are indicated below in italics. Corresponding responses are shown in plain text.

Is this a state or local standard of cover? Do state resources or local capabilities determine it?

- There are two components to consider. Some communities are already well equipped, and the goal is to quantify that capacity in a way that insurance companies can understand and value. From there, the next step is to establish a standard of coverage. This process will involve analyzing total response capacity—both local and state—and, based on defined targets, identifying where gaps in coverage exist.
- The intent is to use this information to guide future planning efforts. It is not intended to serve as a compliance requirement.

Comments on Recommendation 25-G

- There is a proposal for federal legislation to establish a standard of cover for wildfire response. In order for this to be effective, it is essential that local agencies, counties, and state agencies are all involved in shaping and implementing the standard. Total collaboration across all levels of government is necessary to ensure the standard supports and aligns with the federal wildfire response framework.
- The Subcommittee needs to clearly identify what this assessment process will look like and determine which entity or entities will be responsible for carrying it out.

Decision: Commissioner Sean Jewell motioned to vote on approving the recommendation. Commissioner Pam Feely seconded the motion. Through a roll call vote, Commission members approved Recommendation 25-G. The results of the roll call vote are shown in the table below.

Type of Vote	Voting Members
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In favor	Bryce Boyer, Jim Candelaria, Lesley Dahlkemper, Pam Feely, Hugo Ferchau, Nathan Fogg, Desmond Fulton, Sean Jewell, Connie Johnson, Vaughn Jones, Mike Morgan, Mark Novak, Alec Oughton, Brett Powell, Sean Smith, and Jess Solze
Against	None
Abstained	None
Absent	Dan Gibbs, Stan Hilkey, KC Hume, Kevin Klein, Matt McCombs, Brett Schroetlin, Scott Trainor, and Kevin Whelan

Insurance Legislative Update

Carole Walker, RMIIA, provided an update on insurance legislation. Her remarks are summarized below.

Risk Model Use in Property Insurance Policies ([HB 25-1182](#)):

- House Bill 25-1182 represents a significant step forward in addressing wildfire-related insurance challenges. The insurance industry actively engaged stakeholders throughout the development of the bill, leading to effective and thoughtful solutions.
- The bill directly responds to concerns raised by the Colorado State Fire Chiefs (CSFS) and Colorado Counties, Inc. (CCI), who expressed that they did not fully understand the insurance risk models and questioned whether mitigation efforts truly influence coverage outcomes. HB 25-1182 aims to clarify this relationship, ensuring that proactive mitigation work at the community and property level leads to tangible benefits in insurance coverage.
- Under the bill, insurance companies will be required to incorporate community- and property-specific mitigation standards—such as those set by the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS) or similar organizations—into their risk modeling. This change could serve as a catalyst for increasing the number of wildfire-prepared homes across Colorado.

Power Grid and Utilities (PGU)

Nate Fogg, Arapahoe County Office of Emergency Management Manager, provided an overview of the scoping conversation of the PGU Subcommittee.

- The PGU Subcommittee has not yet formally met. It will discuss liability coverage protection features to reduce the fault of an electricity provider.
- The Wyoming State Legislature is supporting similar measures to limit liability for electrical utilities. These measures include requirements for electricity providers to offer situational awareness tools and to coordinate with public safety agencies during system shutdowns.
- There is potential for utility companies to provide funding to DPFC to support these efforts. Looking ahead, the Subcommittee's focus is expected to shift toward enhancing infrastructure resilience and encouraging proactive strategies.

Comments Regarding the PGU Subcommittee

- Creating varying levels of power utility company liability is important for insurance companies. Insurance companies want to engage in the PGU Subcommittee conversations. Carole Walker will find a representative to participate in the Subcommittee.
- The WUI plays a critical role in how utilities conduct analysis and modeling for planned power shut-offs. Currently, utilities are operating in a fragmented manner, with each modeling the WUI independently. There are notable differences between investor-owned utilities and cooperatives in how they approach this work. Many utilities are also facing significant challenges in obtaining insurance coverage, as rates have increased dramatically.
- Wyoming offers a successful example: to receive liability protection and gain access to landowners' properties, utilities are required to submit a Wildfire Mitigation Plan Agreement (WMPA). This structured requirement helped ensure more effective planning and coordination.

Training

Bryce Boyer, Pueblo Fire Department, and Lisa Pine, DFPC Fire Training Director, provided an update on the Training Subcommittee's efforts. Their update is summarized below, and the language of the [draft recommendations is available through this link](#).

Recommendation 25-A: Statewide Online Learning Management Platform

- The Training Subcommittee revised the original concept of a base education training program and structured the recommendation as a three-year plan.
- The Subcommittee also updated the request for resources, clarifying the need for a full-time equivalent (FTE) position, increasing the original request from half an FTE to one full FTE.
- The total estimated cost for the online learning component is \$125,000 per year, with an additional \$50,000 to \$100,000 allocated annually for the FTE position.

- The Subcommittee previously identified the need for more widespread and accessible training through a fire department needs assessment. Departments with volunteers and staff in rural areas most frequently indicated interest in this resource. This recommendation provides a training solution with the lowest cost request.
- This online training platform represents the first part of a two-part firefighter training program; additional training components will be delivered through in-person sessions.

Questions Regarding Recommendation 25-A

Commission members asked Bryce and Lisa clarifying questions about Recommendation 25-A. Questions are indicated below in italics. Corresponding responses are shown in plain text.

Is this a reallocation of funds or a recommendation to fund it?

The recommendation is to ask the Legislature to help determine how to fund these needs, rather than reallocating existing funds.

Comments on Recommendation 25-A

- Training is often not perceived as a critical need. The associated costs could present a significant barrier to the proposal's approval. It is important to ask: "What is the Fire Commission doing to identify potential sources of funding to support this effort?"
- While some constituents of a commissioner expressed hesitance to the virtual training platform, many indicated they would definitely use it.
- The degree to which the learning platform will be adopted statewide is unknown. Some departments may be proactive while others may not participate at all.
- A training survey is currently being conducted to assess how similar training programs are being implemented across the United States.
- The Fire Service is facing funding challenges, particularly following reductions in property taxes, which traditionally serve as a base for their budgets. As a result, agencies and departments are adequately funded.

Decision: Commissioner Hugo Ferchau motioned to move the recommendation to a vote. Commissioner Pam Feely seconded the motion. Through a roll call vote, Commissioners

approved recommendation 25-A. The results of the roll call vote are shown in the table below.

Type of Vote	Voting Members
In favor	Bryce Boyer, Lesley Dahlkemper, Pam Feely, Hugo Ferchau, Nathan Fogg, Desmond Fulton, Sean Jewell, Connie Johnson, Vaughn Jones, Mike Morgan, Mark Novak, Alec Oughton, Brett Powell, Sean Smith, and Jess Solze
Against	Jim Candelaria
Abstained	None
Absent	Dan Gibbs, Stan Hilkey, KC Hume, Kevin Klein, Matt McCombs, Brett Schroetlin, Scott Trainor, and Kevin Whelan

Commission members added the following caveats:

- The Fire Commission needs to figure out the funding source for this recommendation.
- The Fire Commission must continue to show its needs (e.g., similar to police asking for a license plate fee).

Recommendation 25-B: Enhance Firefighter Readiness Training and Certification Opportunities

- Much of the feedback the Subcommittee received was addressed. The list of requests was pared down accordingly. For example, items that had already been attempted in the past—though not previously successful—were removed, especially since the necessary equipment has now been acquired through grant funding.
- Fire departments are often forced to make difficult cost tradeoff decisions during budgetary cutbacks. Training is one of the first areas to be reduced or eliminated.
- While the Fire Commission is not voting on a specific funding source, there is a strong belief that if training gaps are not consistently prioritized in front of legislators, it risks being eliminated from future budgets.
- The estimated cost is approximately \$3 million for the first year and approximately \$2.3 million annually for ongoing implementation for at least two additional years.
- Several ideas for funding sources have been discussed. Those ideas include:

- Implementing a fee is likely not a viable option.
- The Commission could explore similar voluntary funding mechanisms to Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), such as license plate donations.
- The Fire Commission could work with county commissioners to create an option on property tax forms. When individuals receive forms from tax assessors, they could be asked whether they would like to contribute to a fund supporting rural fire training. These voluntary contributions would be collected by assessors and directed to DFPC.

Comments Regarding Recommendation 25-B

- The tax assessor donation funding proposal would need to be reviewed and approved through CCI, as it relates specifically to rural fire training.
- Mortgage payments typically include property taxes. Those taxes are paid by mortgage companies on behalf of homeowners. This could complicate efforts to include voluntary donation options on tax forms.

Decision: Commissioner Sean Jewel motioned to vote on approving the recommendation. Commissioner Jess Solze seconded the motion. Through a roll call vote, Commissioners passed Recommendation 25-B. The results of the roll call vote are shown in the table below.

Type of Vote	Voting Members
In favor	Bryce Boyer, Lesley Dahlkemper, Pam Feely, Hugo Ferchau, Nathan Fogg, Desmond Fulton, Sean Jewell, Connie Johnson, Vaughn Jones, Mike Morgan, Mark Novak, Alec Oughton, Brett Powell, Sean Smith, and Jess Solze
Against	Jim Candelaria
Abstained	None
Absent	Dan Gibbs, Stan Hilkey, KC Hume, Kevin Klein, Matt McCombs, Brett Schroetlin, Scott Trainor, and Kevin Whelan

Some commissioners added the following caveat to their vote: The Fire Commission must find a funding source and work with constituents during the process.

Legislative Subcommittee

Sean Jewell, West Metro Fire Division Chief, provided an update on the Legislative Subcommittee's recent activities. His remarks are summarized below.

- The Legislative Subcommittee's objectives include tracking recommendations as they move through the legislative process and serving as a rapid response team when needed.
- This subcommittee will be responsible for providing testimony. The designated spokesperson will always represent the consensus of the group.
- If there are any changes to the intent of a legislative recommendation, the Fire Commission will be notified.
- This group will also proactively develop talking points for use when engaging with stakeholders and will coordinate overall messaging with Commission members to ensure consistency.
- A meeting will be scheduled to begin organizing and advancing this work.
- Carole Walker expressed interest in lending support to these efforts.

Overview of Reflections on the Annual Cycle

Katie Lobodzinski, DFPC Administrator, provided Commission members with a background on the annual cycle for their consideration. Highlights of her points are summarized below.

- The Fire Commission decided during the April 10, 2025, meeting that all approved recommendations will be compiled and framed within the Commission's annual report.
- Over the next month, Commissioners should inform Katie how specific they want the Fire Commission's future focus outlined, including the level of detail they prefer from Subcommittee updates.
- Katie will develop a survey to gather reflections on the previous cycle and collect recommendations for the upcoming cycle.

Discussion on the Annual Cycle

- It is important to highlight in the annual report the shortage of available funding for the significant and urgent needs that exist. The Fire Service could request that legislators identify an interested party who can work directly with them to develop solutions.
- The Fire Commission should establish a forward-looking vision for the next six years. This could involve creating a long-term work plan that defines goals and priorities for the next several years.

- There are many critically important issues currently on the table, and it is necessary to develop a clear internal strategy for how these efforts will be coordinated moving forward.

Commission Member Updates

Pueblo Fire Department

As a professional firefighter in Colorado, the FEMA disbandment is significant. The Fire Service relies heavily on FEMA for jobs, as well as for support related to health, wellness, and safety.

Tri-State Generation and Transmission

Utility companies could provide funding to support training efforts.

West Metro Fire Board

Improvement and retention efforts are important priorities. Any excess funds should be returned to the fire departments, the IRS, or other relevant entities. However, there is a concern that these funds could trigger a non-qualified plan. To address this, each plan can individually transfer its risk to insurance companies.

Special District Association (SDA)

The SDA remains interested in creating a Special Forest District for improving forest health.

Public Comment

No member of the public made any comments.

Next Steps

- The next quarterly Fire Commission meeting is on October 21 in Keystone. Katie will share additional meeting information (time and location) as it becomes available.
- Christina Burri will send Katie the CSFS legislative letter template for distribution to Commission members.
- Katie will:
 - Distribute the amended April 10 Fire Commission meeting summary.
 - Forward the CSFS legislative letter template to Commission members.
 - Distribute the updated bylaws to the Fire Commission.
 - Share the federal emergency management funding and FEMA slide deck with Commission members.
 - Coordinate the SFMO and COFIRE Subcommittee meetings.

- Develop a survey to gather reflections on the previous cycle and collect recommendations for the upcoming cycle.