

STATE OF COLORADO

Colorado Water Conservation Board Department of Natural Resources

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TO: CWCB Board Members

FROM: Kevin Houck, Watershed & Flood Protection Section

DATE: March 5, 2014

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item #26, May 21-22, 2014 Board Meeting
Watershed & Flood Protection- Wildfire Recovery Update**

John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

Mike King
DNR Executive Director

James Eklund
CWCB Director

Staff Recommendation: *This is an informational item only. No Board action is required.*

Background:

Wildfire has always been a natural process of regular frequency throughout Colorado. However, with recent population encroachment and weather variability, the impacts and overall size of wildfires have increased dramatically since the year 2000. Specifically, the three largest wildfires in Colorado history have occurred this century:

- Hayman (2002 – 137,760 acres)
- West Fork Complex (2013 – 110,405 acres)
- High Park (2012 – 87,284 acres)

In addition, the four most destructive wildfires in Colorado history in terms of homes destroyed have taken place just since 2010:

- Fourmile (2010 – 169 homes)
- High Park (2012 – 259 homes)
- Waldo Canyon (2012 – 346 homes)
- Black Forest (2013 – 509 homes)

Due to the large number of destructive fires in recent years, there is a significant amount of ongoing recovery actions taking place. These actions have focused on land stabilization, flood control, emergency preparedness, forest health, and protection of water supply infrastructure. There has also been a renewed emphasis on mitigation activities to lower the possibility and negative effects of future wildfires.

Staff will provide an informational presentation regarding the status of recovery in the watersheds most recently affected by wildfires, primarily in the South Platte and Arkansas River basins. In addition, an outlook to the 2014 wildfire season will be presented.