



COLORADO

**Colorado Water
Conservation Board**

Department of Natural Resources

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TO: Colorado Water Conservation Board Members

FROM: Kevin Houck, P.E., Chief
Watershed and Flood Protection Section

DATE: August 28, 2014

AGENDA ITEM #15: Royal Gorge Wildfire Water Supply Protection Project Update

Background:

In June 2013, the Royal Gorge Fire burned through the Royal Gorge area near Canon City. Ultimately, the fire would burn over 3,200 acres and would destroy 48 out of 52 structures in the Royal Gorge Park. The fire, which was determined in 2014 to be man-caused, did not result in any injuries or deaths, but did affect the water supply for the City of Canon City, whose intake is located nearby. A presidential disaster declaration was declared for this incident, which also included the Black Forest Fire and the West Fork Complex Fire.

Subsequent to the fire, the City of Canon City applied for and received a grant from the Water Supply Reserve Account, for a total of \$485,000. The funds have been used for the following activities:

- Debris removal from the 48 burned structures and other random debris
- Construction and installation of 172 check structures in three watershed drainages to stabilize channel gradient and prevent sediment migration to the Arkansas River
- Retreatment of 853 acres, which included aerial reseeding followed by hydro-ax mastication for better soil/seed interface
- Planting of pinon pine seedlings at select locations to accelerate the return of trees to the site, stabilize soils, to provide a seed source for coming years, and to add a vegetative structure for wildlife. Over 900 seedlings were planted

Remarkably, the project was completed as scoped, and a sizeable portion of the granted amount (nearly \$200K) was returned since the project was completed under budget and the match funders contributed additional funds.

The City of Canon City will address the board and provide details of this successful wildfire recovery project that incorporates efforts from two CWCB sections.

Staff recommendation:

This is an informational item and no board action is requested.

