

**IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL FIRE PLAN
IN COLORADO**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION
ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL FIRE PLAN

MAY 18, 2002
GOLDEN, CO



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IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL FIRE PLAN IN COLORADO

SATURDAY, MAY 18, 2002

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCE,
Golden, CO.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m. in Forest Service Region 2 Auditorium, 740 Simms Street, Golden, Colorado, Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BEN NIGHTHORSE CAMPBELL, U.S. SENATOR FROM COLORADO

Senator CAMPBELL. Good morning. I think we're going to go ahead and start this committee hearing in session, even though I'm the only one. Welcome this morning. I wish we were here under different circumstances and a little better year in terms of forest fires, but we're doing this committee hearing so I can gather information for the full committee, and everything will be a matter of public record. And you're welcome to turn in any written testimony, too, but we intend to share this with our colleagues when I get back to Congress.

I don't have to tell you what a bad year it is. I'm sure most of you already know that, but as I understand it, we've already had 283 fires this year up from 54 we had last year, which was considered the worse fire season in Colorado's history. I requested this hearing because we are at a time when we have seen our surplus disappear. We're going to be moving into a year of deficit again, and we need to continue to prioritize the fire, the mechanism which we provide funds to fight fires from the congressional level, but clearly, we don't seem to be able to prevent them, we seem to be getting worse every year. I'd like to, when we have the professionals testify, learn more about that.

But I note with interest that most of our people in the audience are the professionals, or they have some close relationship to the problem we face, and not too many just private citizens whose lives or property may be affected because of the disastrous fire.

Clearly, though, fire affects all types of lands and all walks of life. It doesn't stop at Federal or State or private boundaries. And that's why we have a cross-section of the fire-fighting community here to testify for us today. We have Mr. Jim Hubbard, the Colorado State forester. We're also pleased to have the U.S. Forest Service Rocky Mountain Regional Forester, Mr. Rick Cables, to help us look at this complex issue from a Federal standpoint.

And making sure that we know what's actually happening on the ground and as our Nation reviews strategies and how to best implement and coordinate, we have Mr. Scott Wells, the director of Jefferson County's Criminal Incident Fire Response, and Mr. Mike Tombolato, the District Chief of the Cherryvale Fire District too. So thank you for being here. And I think that's all the people that will be testifying. But we'll go through testimony. I'll ask a few questions, and then we have a couple of open microphones set up, if there's anybody who would like to make a statement, we'll keep a portion of the time for you to be able to do that, too.

Through Wednesday of this week, we have lost over 603,644 acres of forest and range land to fires nationwide with over 25,900 of those being lost in the Rocky Mountain region. One only has to look back through the national fire incident reports starting in April through the first week of May to understand how fire is changing all of our lives. We started out on April 19 with two fires on the Pike/San Isabel National Forest and one in the Arapahoe-Roosevelt National Forest, Topaz Mountain, Hewlett Gulch and Cedar Mountain.

By April 21, the Hewlett Mountain fire had grown to 500 acres, Topaz Mountain was up to 325 acres, and a new fire called the Snake had started and burned 1,800 acres and two structures. On May 4 and 5, the Hanover fire burned over 5,000 acres, and the Black Mountain fire started near Clear Creek. Although, relatively small by May 7, it was very close to town, and fire managers indicated that over 1,700 residents were endangered and many had to evacuate.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. And I've asked staff to bring a couple of maps here to show you the difference of what has happened the last few years. This first map, and I direct you up here where my staffer Brandi is, that first map shows the average moisture content and the vegetation of our Nation in late April for the year 1996. As you can see, that was a very moist year beginning in May, but still burned that year over 6.7 million acres.

You can also see that most of those acres were further in the east, around the Mississippi Delta or some of the plain States, but where we live in Colorado, look at the size of the snowpack. It was good. Most of it's green. A couple of the brown areas down in the Southwest and the Southeast, but generally, it was a year that we think was relatively good.

Now, Brandi, if you take that map, maybe, and hold it up next to the next one, the next one is the year 2000, just 4 years later, the year that Los Alamos burned. By the way, we had a very bad start. By the end of May, we had burned over one million acres with a total of 8.4 million acres for the year, and look how green that vegetation is. Look at the difference between those two areas of Colorado just in that amount of 2 years.

And we have a third one, too. And this one is 2002. And if you'll look at the lack of moisture we are facing this year, look at how brown we are, and it's only May. How little snowpack there is, too, between even 2000 and 2002. It's clearly, you know, when you read the papers and you see the news about the great floods, they're sure not here. You can see how green it is in just around the Mississippi Valley area, Mississippi Delta area, but clearly, here in the

Rocky Mountain range from Canada to Mexico, it is a dry, dry year. That doesn't come as a surprise to anybody, but in the relative difference between what we had just a couple years ago and now, that should give us a big indication of what we might be facing this summer.

One thing I don't show, of course, on any of these maps is all the new homes that are being built in high-fire areas as Colorado grows in population. We're the fourth fastest growing State, as you know. And many of the people in our inward migration, they came to this beautiful State because they want to be near the mountains, and they want to be on some nice secluded dirt road right out there where they land butts up right up to the national forest.

Sometimes they came to an area where it's a 10-minute response for the local fire department, if anything goes wrong. And I think many of them probably fail to recognize that they may be an hour or even two away from getting a response to their house if it's in an area that they picked for their future home.

Now, of course, that doesn't lessen our responsibility to try to do what we can in terms of saving lives and saving property, too. And in my view, we are doing a pretty good job, but this hearing, of course, is to try to find out how we can do a better job.

And I expect our witnesses today will tell us that this could be the worst fire year in decades. But the main reason is, as I mentioned already, I'm really more interested in how we're going to coordinate and use the resources we have and what we can do in Congress to make it a little better.

Some time ago, the Government Accounting Office reviewed how well the Government has worked at implementing the National Fire Plan. The results of that study were, frankly, pretty bad. The committees had a hearing on that issue recently, so I don't want to revisit that whole thing, but I only want to mention a couple of conclusions that were reached.

First, over half of the Federal land management units still do not have a fire management plan meeting the requirements of the 1995 National Fire Management Plan. Therefore, these units cannot fully determine the level of personnel or equipment that they need.

Furthermore, the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior have not developed performance measures to determine the extent to which the additional resources have resulted in more effective fire-fighting. Therefore, any new money we put in the appropriation process in Congress necessarily isn't being used well if we don't have a plan on how to use it.

From 1952 to 1997, net annual soft growth has more than doubled in the West, and I think sometimes we call this the "politics of fire." And the politics of fire means the push and pull about whether we should glean the forests or whether we shouldn't, and how it relates to decision-makers and their decision-making ability. But it also means that in our national forests alone, about 73 million acres are now at risk from wildlife fires which could affect human safety.

Unnaturally dense forests also tend to be a breeding ground for all manner of insects, pests and pathogens that make trees even more prone to fire damage. And I'm sure I'm not telling that to anyone in the room that's a professional that it doesn't come as a

surprise to them. But in order to make our forests more manageable and to prevent wildfires from raging out of control, we need to thin the unnaturally dense forests. There are only two acceptable ways that I know of, though you may enlighten me if there are more, to get that mission done, one is through prescribed burns, and the other is through some kind of manual thinning of the forests of excess trees that could become fuel.

There is a third way, I suppose, but I don't think it's really an acceptable way, and that's to let these things get away and rage out of control into some kind of an inferno that threatens everybody, including all of us in this room.

Managing prescribed burns provides a whole host of challenges. However, administering prescribed burns under severe drought conditions like Colorado's currently facing is practically impossible, or at least very difficult, because so many of them risk getting out of control and, of course, that's what we saw in New Mexico last year with the Los Alamos fire; it was supposed to be a prescribed burn.

Therefore, the option we're left with under conditions such as this year, I believe, is thinning the forests. Clearing the excess small density timber from the forests not only improves forest health and diminishes the likelihood of damaging wildfires, but it can also be a boon to the local business. But it is not cheap. It costs anywhere from \$150 to \$500 an acre to remove and destroy trees. And, in fact, in some roadless areas, it can be a lot more expensive than that.

I have heard of using helicopters that take them out. I've heard of dragging them out with teams of horses in roadless areas. All that is much more expensive than using mechanized tools. Those costs could be offset in some ways by enlisting the private sector that uses what would have normally been thrown away, and that is the trees that are gleaned out of the forest.

Congress and the Federal Government recognize the multiplier benefits of the forest to taxpayers and to local businesses by providing what was called "stewardship contracting" authority to Federal agencies, which is basically the Federal agency signing a contract with private people who would take dead trees out.

Over the last several months, we have addressed forests and forest health risk during the debates over the energy bill and the farm bill, in fact, both of them. During each debate or conference, some of our members in Congress worked and, in fact, did eliminate programs that would help our Federal land managers deal with the overstocked forests from which we now suffer, and so our stewardship contracting is literally at a halt.

First, during debates on the energy bill, we saw an attempt to diminish the potential of the Renewable Energy Program by defining biomass that comes from the national forest as only brush and slash and precommercial trees. Properly defined, the biomass provision would be a win-win situation for our energy needs and the community needs and our forest if that was broadened.

In the farm bill, opponents killed a proposal to approve a stewardship contracting and biomass energy grant program during the bill conference. And why? Well, very simply, in short, most of the

extreme views in the environmental groups in this country simply do not want timber harvested from the national forest.

Fully 54 percent of our national forest timberlands are stocked with trees that are less than 13 inches in diameter. That's over 52 million acres out of the more than 96 million acres of national forest lands that are considered to be forest. These are the forests that are overstocked with hundreds and sometimes even thousands of trees per acre.

One hundred years ago, we had roughly 40 to 50 trees per acre. These are the very same areas, the very same stands where we used to have small, low-intensity fires that the forests and communities could deal with. These are the very forests that our experts tell us that we must salvage. These are the ones that have sometimes three to 500 trees in the same area.

And that is why the Western Governors developed a collaborative 10-year strategy for reducing wildlife fire risk to communities and the environment. That strategy was signed in last August of last year by the Western Governors and the Secretary of the Interior and Agriculture. I cosponsored a concurrent resolution with Senator Craig and Senator Feinstein that calls for the full implementation of that policy and will introduce a copy into the record this morning.

But we know fire is an indiscriminate killer of man and property. And all the experts, science, and facts show us that the build-up of hazardous material in our forests is severely jeopardizing our ability to prevent and control fires. Then why do we continue attempts to prohibit responsible forest management, incorporating forest thinning and stewardship contracting? Well, it relates, of course, as I mentioned, to the politics of fire, but we simply do not have the political will of Congress yet to do more.

And I would just recommend to those people who have always opposed any thinning, opposed any cutting, that maybe they ought to come out here for a while in the dry west and live out there near the forest for a while and have the unfortunate experience that some people in Colorado have had.

I don't have to tell the people in Colorado who watched the 1999 fire when it devastated the Buffalo Creek drainage that the no-touch approach is not working. One only has to go up Buffalo Creek, and I have not been there myself, but my staff has, they tell me the devastation of the watershed that was brought on with thunderstorms after that fire was a terrible thing. And I'm sure the city of Denver and those communities that have to do the dredging of the water storage areas that fill up with silt understand the catastrophic result of it, too.

It's simply unfair to expect our firefighters and communities across the country to face worsening fire situations when we do know how to change, when we do know how to fix it. And I submit we're simply not going to improve the health of the Nation's forest by just letting it build up and build up more and more.

Well, let me stop there and welcome our people that are going to testify today. And with that, maybe, let's see, why don't we just start from left to right? Or maybe we should start with the Federal level first. Maybe we'll start with Rick first and work our way

down to the local. Rick, why don't you go ahead. Thank you for being here.

STATEMENT OF RICK CABLES, REGIONAL FORESTER, ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION, FOREST SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Mr. CABLES. Well, good morning, and welcome to the USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Regional Office. We're really pleased to be able to host this, and we're really pleased that you decided to have a field hearing right here in our backyard. It certainly makes it convenient for us. I've prepared written testimony which we've submitted, I know you have copies, and there are some more copies over there on the table for anyone else who'd like a copy.

Senator Campbell, I want to express our appreciation to you and the committee for allowing us to have this hearing here in Lakewood and discuss the National Fire Plan. I also would like to thank you and members of the committee for your support of the National Fire Plan and the Fire Management Program, but more importantly, for your support of the fire-fighting community. Our firefighters do an impressive job under extraordinarily adverse conditions, and they deserve our appreciation, gratitude, and admiration for the services they provide to the public.

The issue of fire management in the Rocky Mountain region in Colorado is of the highest urgency, as you've already pointed out, with the drought conditions we have this year. We've already had four large fires, two of them right here outside of Denver over the past month alone that have threatened life, property and watersheds.

I would also like to thank Governor Owens and his cabinet officers and the State agencies and, particularly, the State forester, Jim Hubbard, the county sheriffs, the volunteer firefighters and all the city council, county, State, Federal, and tribal firefighters for their hard work in providing for a safe and efficient initial attack on wildfires.

When it comes to fire-fighting, the color of the uniform doesn't matter. What matters is our joint capability to respond quickly, decisively and safely. Colorado is fortunate to have our Interagency Unified Incident Command leadership for these catastrophic events, and I believe this is one of the places where we have the best coordination in the Nation, and we're going to talk about that a little bit.

So thank you for the opportunity. I'm going to take just a few minutes and, you mentioned the Buffalo Creek fire, and share with you, 6 years ago today, the Buffalo Creek fire started, May 18, 1996. I was with my daughter at a soccer game in Denver. At that time, she was 10 years old, and we had a real hot, dry spell. I remember we were spraying the girls with mist to keep them from overheating.

At about 1 o'clock, we started heading home. At that time, I was the forest supervisor on the Pike and San Isabel National Forest which is where the Buffalo Creek area is. We started driving down the interstate to Colorado Springs, and I looked over to the west, and I could see this plume of smoke coming up over that country on the Pike around Buffalo Creek. And from the time I left that

soccer game to the time I got to Colorado Springs, which was about an hour and 15 minutes, I would guess that fire went from about a 50-acre fire to probably 5,000 acres.

Senator CAMPBELL. In how long?

Mr. CABLES. In just an hour, hour and 15 minutes. It was cranking. You could see this plume of smoke that was just phenomenal. And, of course, I knew the minute I saw the initial plume that we were in trouble, because the winds were up, we had an extended dry period. I grabbed my fire gear, turned around, and headed back up here, and in this very room, we staged our fire teams and did the war-planning for that fire.

It was too windy to fly that day. We couldn't get our air tankers up. We couldn't put any slurry on the fire. Our hotshot crew from the Pike National Forest, the Pike Hotshots, got to Buffalo Creek, the community and the subdivisions, fortunately, ahead of the fire and, with the local fire department and volunteers, were able to protect most of the structures. We lost structures on the Buffalo Creek fire, but not nearly what we could have. Miraculously, no one was killed or injured that day seriously, but by the time that fire was done and it was one burning period from about noon to 6 p.m., it had consumed 12,000 acres.

I remember about 3 days later standing in front of a public meeting in a community center in Buffalo Creek, and I been working for the Forest Service about 25 years, and this was the most difficult public meeting I've ever been to, because you had folks there that had been evacuated from their homes. We had people there that had lost their homes, hadn't slept for days, angry, upset, afraid, demanding accountability, which I can appreciate, and we had to host this public meeting in this community center and listen to these concerns, and folks were mad. They said, how did it happen? Who started the fire? And, you know, of course, fingers were pointing, and it was very difficult.

But that fire was started by a campfire that got away. It was a man-caused fire, and it was just one of those situations where, once we got a start, that we were not going to catch the fire that day.

That very community center where we had that meeting, about 2 months later, was washed down the river in the ensuing flood that we had. And we had multiple flood events, as you pointed out, filled up Stauntia Springs reservoir, which is the last holding reservoir for Denver water on the South Platte drainage. And if you go to South Platte, or if you go to the Buffalo Creek fire area, even today, we've got invasive species problems. We've got a sea of black sticks that are there where once we had a forest, and it's not a very pleasant sight. And it's been extremely expensive. We estimate we've probably spent \$25 million over the course of time between fire-fighting efforts, rehabilitation, the Denver water dredging reservoir and so on and so forth.

And I guess if there were ever a place where you could look at where all these factors come together that you just talked about, it would be the Buffalo Creek fire area. And I guess the most compelling thing to me was, I was responsible, felt responsible. Our agency felt responsibility for helping prevent the fire, to get crews on the fire, to put the forest in a condition to prevent it. And, of

course, we weren't there. We didn't start the fire, that was just something that happened.

But when you're in these jobs like some of us are in, you feel the responsibility when those kind of events occur. And that could be the end of the story, but, in fact, it was really just the beginning, because from that fire, we cooperated with the Colorado State Forest Service and built the red zone, what we call the Red Zone Assessment in Colorado where we looked at fire risk, fire hazard and values, and basically, that's just a bunch of jargon to say, where are houses in the forest? Where do people live inside the forest?

We built an assessment in 1996, it's been updated, and those two maps to the left show that. And I'm sure Jim Hubbard will touch on that some more. If you look at this map over here, we've got all the National Fire Plan projects across all the agencies in Colorado. Down here, we've got all the different agencies that were involved with us, State, local, Federal. Colorado has one of the most comprehensive integrated approaches to the fire plan of any State probably in the Union, in my view, anyway.

So then in the year 2000, we had the Bobcat and Hi Meadows fires right up here outside the Front Range, and that was kind of the last feat with the bitter root fires that put in place the National Fire Plan. And the political will, everything lined up, it seemed to help fund the National Fire Plan which has been a tremendous help to us in not only having firefighters, but also dealing with the hazardous fuels you referred to.

And when we get into maybe some question and answers, I'll go through some of the things we've done. But I just want to reinforce, this is a personal thing, I think, to those of us that have to be accountable when we're standing there with folks that have their homes threatened or you're standing with people that have evacuated their homes and they're afraid. And we take it very seriously. And we're really trying to make the best use of the dollars that Congress has allocated through the fire planning.

The other thing I'd say, the BLM in Colorado, and again, if you look at that map, all the yellow is BLM lands, has been a tremendous partner, so we're working really closely with Interior, and our Forest Service research folks, and John Tolver is here from Rocky Mountain Research Station, sitting right behind me, have initiated several research programs with dollars available through the National Fire Plan to help us look at the issues around fire. So with that, I'll stop. I'll be pleased when the questions come to answer whatever questions you may have. And again, thank you for being here.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Cables follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RICK CABLES, REGIONAL FORESTER, ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION, FOREST SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee: Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you today. I am Rick Cables, Regional Forester for the Rocky Mountain Region, USDA Forest Service.

At the outset, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you and members of the committee for your support of the National Fire Plan and fire management program and, most importantly, for your support of our firefighting community. Our firefighters do an impressive job under adverse conditions and they deserve our thanks and admiration.

Today, I will talk about the potentially severe fire season now underway, and how the land-managing agencies and our partners in the Rocky Mountain area are making preparations. While we prepare to fight fire this season as best we can, fighting wildland fires is only one aspect of the work we must do to protect communities and restore ecosystems.

Fires in recent years, especially those that have occurred in the Front Range, have heightened our collective awareness for firefighter and public safety. The Buffalo Creek Fire, started six years ago today, when I was the Pike/San Isabel Forest Supervisor, clearly illustrated the impact and cost of the offsite effects of wildfire as experienced by the effects of sedimentation on Strontia Reservoir. The Hi Meadow Fire in June 2000 showed us not only the impact of losing homes, it also demonstrated that vegetation management along with the use of prescribed fire can make a difference in the reducing the severity and spread of wildland fire.

THE FIRE SITUATION AND OUTLOOK

The outlook is for a severe fire season this year. As you know, we have already experienced a number of wildland fires in Region 2. The Interior West continues to experience severe drought conditions. Our below average snow packs and early runoff have affected a wide cross section of users and communities. For us, it means that fuel moistures in the forests have not recharged and in many areas are at lower levels than 2000, a very difficult fire year.

The National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in Boise has provided us with a long range weather outlook for later this summer and fall that calls for generally warmer than normal temperatures in the West. Rainfall, however, is predicted to be near normal through this period. The high temperatures and near normal precipitation coupled with the extended drought conditions increases the fire potential in the Rockies this summer and fall.

WILDLAND FIRE PREPAREDNESS

Each year, the interagency effort in Region 2 works to provide an overarching effort in all elements of the fire management programs. These include prevention and public activities, preparation and initial attack, large fire support, fuels reduction programs and effective support of communities in a host of cooperative efforts. Interagency cooperation has long been the cornerstone of effective wildland fire fighting. In Colorado, this has been evident with the excellent working relationships between Federal, Tribal, State, Local governments and a host of dedicated volunteers. The cooperation is most evident in Colorado State Forest Service's sponsorship of the annual Wildland Fire Academy. This interagency effort continues to be anchored in providing standards for safety and coordination, offers a variety of wildland fire training courses and is attended by well over 900 firefighters. The effort has spawned similar efforts in New York and Texas.

We in the Rocky Mountain Region consciously focus on safety. We have taken a pledge "never to forget". The legacy of the South Canyon Fire in Glenwood Springs remains with us and continues to guide us in our efforts. Firefighting is a high risk, high consequence activity, and the Forest Service has always had strong firefighter safety and training programs. This year, however, following the Thirty-Mile Fire tragedy in July 2001, where four firefighters lost their lives, nationally we have redoubled our efforts. The Thirty-Mile tragedy prompted an examination of the programs to identify areas needing improvement. The areas identified include managing firefighter fatigue, reinforcing use of the 10 Standard Fire Orders and the 18 Watch Out situations, and developing training to avoid entrapment by fire. All of these improvements in training and safety are in place for this fire season. We are committed to doing everything we can to improve firefighter safety.

We have also purchased and maintained firefighter personal protection gear and engines, other vehicles, and contracted for helicopters and airtankers services. Preparedness also includes assisting other Federal agencies, Tribes and States with fire training programs, planning assistance, shared equipment use contracts, and support for interagency fire coordination centers.

In 2001, we made a great start toward increasing our preparedness resources, thanks to the National Fire Plan funding. In Region 2, the Forest Service treated over 58,000 acres to reduce fuel loads and protect priority communities at risk. We will continue this success in FY 2002 and are funded to treat approximately 70,000 acres. We are in the process of completing another revision of the "Red Zone" assessment for Colorado in cooperation with the Colorado State Forester and Department of the Interior agencies. We are completing a similar assessment in Wyoming in partnership with the Wyoming State Forester and our Interior counterparts in Wyo-

ming. These kinds of assessments will help us prioritize preparedness and fuel treatments in those States.

In FY 2001, we hired approximately an additional 182 new permanent employees and 289 seasonal firefighters that brought our firefighting workforce to near 800 permanent and seasonal employees. We also acquired 13 additional engines. That figure includes an additional 20 person hotshot crew (the Roosevelt Hotshots in Fort Collins). In 2002, we are bringing on an additional hotshot crew on the San Juan NF, bringing the Region's total to 5 hotshot crews. Our additional investments in upgrading airtanker bases have already proven to be effective investments, both in initial attack and for large fire support. We continue to monitor fire conditions and this year have already fought fire as early as January. We have been proactive with the use of severity funding and brought additional resources such as helicopters and airtankers on early. In addition, we are working hard at bringing on fire personnel early and where appropriate adjusted training to insure that all personnel meet currency standards before being assigned. The Snaking Fire and the Black Mountain Fire, both with high potential for damage in the wildland urban interface, demonstrated lessons learned with increased coordination and improved tactical operations among cooperating fire fighting agencies.

Interagency coordination and oversight with Interior agencies and State and local agencies is active in Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, South Dakota and to a lesser degree in Kansas. Coordination taskforces and teams meet regularly to evaluate programs and identify priorities. Their collective focus is on effective planning and program delivery at the local level. In Colorado for example, the interagency effort is focused on working with Colorado Counties Incorporated to prepare county-wide fire management plans. In addition, we have co-sponsored an innovative approach to public education and fire prevention in a cooperative effort with the Red Cross. The Interior agencies and the Forest Service have established teams in Wyoming and Colorado to expedite consultation required by the Endangered Species Act.

In addition to our federal firefighting crews, we call upon many other firefighting forces for assistance. Our working relationship with our State and local partners has never been stronger. Often, State and local firefighters are the first to respond to fire incidents.q04

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCEQ01

In Region 2, the Forest Service provided over \$9 million to states, volunteer fire departments, and local communities to assist firefighting activities in 2001 and 2002. With these grants our State and local government partners purchased fire equipment for volunteer fire departments, Rural Fire Departments and developed hazard mitigation plans and projects. Agreements have been made and grants awarded to provide a wide range of fuels activities with efforts ongoing and still underway. In addition, we have contributed to community fire planning, developed market utilization of small diameter material removed through thinning activities, and conducted fire prevention and fire education training.

It is important to note that we and other land management agencies have updated fire management plans to be consistent with Federal wildland fire policy, with a goal to have all plans updated in 2004, if not sooner. Region 2 has updated approximately 50% of our plans and will complete the remainder before 2004. The fire management plans are important because they are the major link to land and resource management plans and provide the guidance for fire management officers, line officers and incident commanders to plan for fire management programs, and to make decisions when an incident occurs, as to the appropriate techniques and tactics for effective wildland fire response.q01

2002 FIRE SEASON READINESSQ01

With the forecast for a severe wildland fire season, Region 2 began early and continues to bring fire readiness capacity to its highest level. We currently have approximately 715 permanent and seasonal firefighters available Region-wide. We are also currently recruiting additional firefighting resources and expect to have 50 more firefighters by the end of June.

When we realized the severity of the wildland fire outlook, we began to hire seasonal firefighters early and we are working to place firefighting crews and equipment in locations where they can be mobilized quickly and effectively.

When local areas anticipate or experience above normal fire activity, we have the authority, through what is known as "severity funding", to provide suppression funds to those units so that they can bring in additional staff and equipment to improve initial and extended attack response capabilities and increase prevention activities. Already this year, the Forest Service has approved authority of over

\$800,000 for severity assistance for Region 2. Federal wildland fire agencies have enhanced initial attack capabilities by pre-positioning resources ranging from airtankers, to hand crews, to engines in strategic locations.

REDUCING FUEL LOADS

Fighting wildland fire is only one part of addressing the long-term buildup of hazardous fuels in our forests and grasslands. Reducing the risks and consequences of severe wildland fires is a high priority for the Administration. Bipartisan Congressional support has provided the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior with the necessary funding to increase the amount of acreage treated to reduce risks to communities and ecosystems. The importance of reducing fuel loads has been recognized for some time as an important issue in Region 2. The Rocky Mountain Region maintains an active internet website to track and display information about the National Fire Plan. This site provides the viewer with a spatial view of fuels projects along with project descriptions and key contacts. You can sort projects by state, congressional district, county and forest. Also, in Colorado, we have utilized the Colorado "Good Neighbor" Agreement process to allow the Colorado State Forest Service to work on National Forest System lands to aid in conducting hazardous fuel treatment projects that affect both agencies.

Nationally, the Departments are beginning this year to develop a common inter-agency fire budget planning process that will better refine wildland fire management readiness resources. The process will provide all agencies with a uniform, performance-based system for identifying the preparedness resources necessary to deliver a cost effective fire management program. This system will be deployed by the 2004 fire season and will influence readiness decisions for the 2005 fire season. Region 2 will be part of this effort.

RESTORATION AND REHABILITATION

In addition to preparedness and hazardous fuels reduction, the Region has a number of extensive restoration and rehabilitation projects that were the result of the fires of 2000 and 2001. The Region received over \$7 million in FY 2001. This funding was used to complete restoration projects on land impacted by fires such as Jasper on the Black Hills National Forest, Hi Meadows on the Pike and San Isabel National Forests and the Bobcat Fire on the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests. Projects funded and completed included noxious weed control, hazard tree mitigation along roads and trails, erosion control measures, and private property corner re-establishment. In FY 2002 the region received over \$5 million to continue the restoration activities on the fires of 2000 and do additional work on 2001 fires.

RESEARCH

The Rocky Mountain Research Station, headquartered in Fort Collins, is active in National Fire Plan research across 13 states of the Interior West. Station scientists received \$8.2 million of National Fire Plan funds for fuels and fire research in the Rockies and West. Their studies will provide valuable information to support implementation of the National Fire Plan by our forest managers in Region 2 and other states. In Colorado alone, station scientists received over \$1.3 million to support studies designed to:

- provide effective alternatives for managing fuels in fire-prone and fire-dependent ecosystems in Colorado and the Black Hills;
- provide ways for the Forest Service and the public to better understand and build consensus on fire management strategies;
- use satellite imagery to determine how insects, diseases and other disturbances may create fire hazards and influence the incidence and spread of wildfire;
- use high-resolution satellite imagery to provide models for forecasting fire weather and the impacts of smoke from fires.
- determine patterns of regeneration of white pine trees after fire and the effect these patterns may have on the spread of white pine blister rust disease.

These studies are coordinated with scientists at Colorado State University, the University of Colorado, Colorado School of Mines, and state and federal land management agencies.

In addition, station scientists are conducting long-term monitoring of the Jasper Fire recovery in the Black Hills and assessing alternatives for managing the South Platte River watershed here in Colorado.

SUMMARY

As stated earlier, the outlook is for a potentially severe fire season this year. The Forest Service in partnership with the other federal land-managing agencies and with our partners at the State and local level are doing all that we can to be prepared for this fire season. We will continue to do everything we can to ensure the safety of firefighters, communities, and resources. We will continue to cooperate and communicate among Federal agencies, States, local governments, Tribes and interested groups and citizens to ensure the long-term safety and health of communities and resources in our care.

This concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman. I would be happy to answer any questions you and the members of the committee may have.

Senator CAMPBELL. Thank you. You mentioned some of the effects, as I did in my opening statement, but the thing I didn't mention, you didn't either, and that is the long-term healing that has to take place. I lived down by Durango this year, and I know Rick, and sometimes I drive up to Silverton. There's a sign by the road up there near an old fire area that's called Line Creek Burn, maybe you know that, I think it was 120 years ago, and you can still see the effects of the fire.

A lot of the young trees have grown back and brush and so on, but there's still, you know, charred remains of old stumps there, 120 years later. So when these things happen, you know, the immediate tragedy is obvious for literally everybody to see. The long-term tragedy is you won't see them in your lifetime like they were, that's for sure.

As you know, I had a couple opportunities when I was a youngster, we've talked about this, to be on the fire lines, and it gives you a whole different perspective of what you face when you're out there. I was just a boy, and that was the day before we had so many politically correct things done and before, you know, everybody was so much into civil rights, they used to come right into the communities with the trucks, in the theaters, where I remember, and load you up. You had a choice: You can go fight the fire or you had to go to jail, that was it, if you were big enough to pick up a shovel or an axe. I don't remember anybody ever refusing.

I mean, when we were young, I only went two or three times, but I was ready to go, and everybody else was, too, because we all knew of the threat. And I think one of the things that's happened now is that we tend to look to somebody else to fix it for us. It's somehow not my fault, and I'm not responsible for getting out there myself unless it's my house, but I'm not responsible for that next town or that next guy's house or something else, that's supposed to be done by some agency, so why aren't you county guys or State guys or so on taking care of this?

I mean, it's almost a form of displacing our anger when we used to sort of accept the responsibility. We all had to get out there. So I think attitudes are changing, too, about it. That's just, I just throw that out for no reason at all, but you were probably aware of it. Okay. Let's go to—just to get it off my chest. Jim? Let's go with Jim Hubbard, State Forester.

**STATEMENT OF JAMES E. HUBBARD,
COLORADO STATE FORESTER**

Mr. HUBBARD. Thank you, Senator Campbell. I appreciate you being here and holding this hearing and bringing your staff with

you so that they can learn something about this, too. I know they already know. I probably could just defer to your opening statement for my testimony. I agree with what you said. Maybe I can elaborate a little bit.

Colorado is not unlike a lot of the interior West. We've got a forest condition that's ready to burn. Most of our forest was created by disturbance, and it's about to be recreated by disturbance, and originally, that was mostly fire. And that forest is 120, 150 years old, and it's at the end of that life-cycle. It has no fuel moisture in those live trees, and so when we get fire, it's more difficult to control. It burns quicker. It burns hotter. It burns angrier. It's a difficult situation, and so initial attack becomes critical.

Add to that the drought that you've talked about. Colorado snowpack this year is 27 percent of normal. That's going to cause all kinds of water problems. But for us, it causes fire problems. It increases the likelihood of ignition. We're dry up to 9,000 feet. That's a lot of exposure for this time of year, and we've already had a number of fires, as you pointed out, four times the normal number for this time of year. And it's moving into the interface.

For the rest of the season, we're totally dependent upon frequency precipitation. The forest is dry, and everything else is dry. If we don't get rains on a regular basis to keep that ignition down, we'll have a lot of fire, and it will be large fire.

You add to that the people that have decided to make their homes in the forests and growth rates in Colorado. We now have nearly a million people living in those six million acres of high-risk interface that we talked about. All 474,000 homes—

Senator CAMPBELL. One million, roughly one-fourth of the—or no, we have 4 million people or thereabouts, so that's about a fourth of the State lives in high-risk areas, you're saying?

Mr. HUBBARD. Yes. And that's continuing to grow. Douglas County is the best example. They're growing very fast and spreading into the interface everywhere. That creates hazards. We've already talked about Buffalo Creek which was not exactly a wake-up call. We knew the situation. But Buffalo Creek scared us. Buffalo Creek burned 2 miles wide by 10 miles long in one afternoon.

And Jefferson County replotted the footprint of the Buffalo Creek fire, a watershed to the north, similar conditions, similar terrain, similar forest, and 840 homes would have been in the way. And that scares us. So we've got to do something about this situation in places, no question about it.

The most recent fires, the early-season fires that we've had west of Denver, 3,500 people were evacuated from two fires. The Black Mountain fire alone, 1,700 homes were evacuated for a 200-acre fire. It's getting that difficult to deal with. I'll let some of these local folks tell you more specifically what they have to do.

The after effects we can talk a lot about, but a lot of Colorado has what we know as hydrophobic soils, so we get fires that are that hot, it seals the surface. And a normal rainfall event produces unusual run-off. A 2-inch rainfall event following Buffalo Creek caused all the damage, and that single event put more sediment in Stauntia Springs reservoir than the previous 12 years of its operation. So all kinds of other problems go with not dealing with the restoration of these watersheds.

The National Fire Plan came along. We welcome it. We thank you for it and continued support. I think the basic premise that said we need to look at preparedness, fuel treatment, watershed restoration, and community assistance is sound. And it can work. Most of our emphasis the first 2 years has been placed on fire-fighting and preparedness, and some on prevention, a lot on mitigation and getting acres treated, fuel treatments accomplished that address this risk. Less emphasis has been placed on dealing with fire-prone ecosystems, watershed restoration, and community assistance.

I would suggest that as we move forward, and it's only been 2 years, but as we move forward, we might want to concentrate more on the restoration and the community assistance, because I believe long-term, that's where the sustainable answer's going to come from.

We do have a collaborative process in Colorado, as Rick has mentioned. It's based on dealing with the priorities identified by that red zone hazard map. We have an implementation group of all the agencies and the land management agencies and local government representation, so we are making progress at how to do this together.

There's been a press to produce acres, so concentration has been on getting that work done, and a lot of effort has been put into that as opposed to, let's all get together and figure out what we're going to do first. So we pressed ahead, and NEPA was a factor. If we wanted to get acres treated immediately, we had to use NEPA projects on Federal land. So those weren't always our highest priority projects, but we wanted to show that we could deliver for the National Fire Plan.

We immediately, though, did begin a joint planning process so that we could get 18, 24 months of NEPA clearance that's required to match the projects up on the Federal land and in the watershed with the private State land projects in the interface. That's happening. It's happening at different paces in other places in the west, but it is beginning to happen in Colorado. And it takes all those ownerships, the private, the State, and the Federal, to work.

We do need leadership, and as you pointed out, the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture and the Western Governors got together. Their charge to us was to deal with all lands, to work together, and to view this as a long-term proposition.

Since then, the wildland Fire Leadership Council has been formed, and that's the Federal agency representatives from Interior and Agriculture, and I would suggest that the Governors, the State foresters, the counties and the tribes need to be added to that council. I believe that's being considered. But that perspective, if we're going to do all lands, is necessary.

Cross-boundary is essential. Interface, of course, from a State perspective, is our priority because we have so much at risk, life and property at risk. But just to treat the interface won't be enough. In some cases, we're going to have to look at a larger scale and look at that watershed. Buffalo Creek coming roaring at you out of a watershed is not, no matter what you've done in your subdivision, it's probably not going to be enough. So there has to be some treatment on the landscape in places.

We have some tools in Colorado. We have one unique tool in Colorado that we've referred to as a "good neighbor treatment." It was authority granted on a 4-year basis by Congress for the State to act as signature on Federal land. So we can cross the boundary widened amendment. The Federal agencies can cross the boundary from Federal to private. With good neighbor authority, the State can cross the boundary onto the Federal land. That helps facilitate this all-ownership approach.

And so we have put the skills to use where we have the skills. And if it's from the Federal Land Management Agency doing the work on private land, we do that. If it's the other way, we do that, too. We have a number of stewardship contracting pilots in Colorado, and I think we've learned how to make that work, if that becomes more than a pilot approach. And we have the South Platte Large Scale Watershed Restoration project.

We've learned a lot. We've put a lot of concentration in the South Platte, partly because of Buffalo Creek and what we saw there, but partly because it makes a lot of sense if our high priorities are to protect life and property and to work across that landscape together.

We understand that Congress is concerned about accountability, and should be. It provided a lot of additional resources for us to work with. I'm hopeful that the follow-up to the collaborative strategy that the Governors and secretaries agreed to, the implementation plan that goes with that, will be signed next week, May 23, in Boise, and that will set out some performance measures that even OMB might agree to, and we'll begin to move ahead, then, with the accountability and to focus on the right actions that need to be taken to reduce this risk to life and property and to restore the watersheds.

We're going to continue, though, to have the reminders with large fire. And hopefully, we're better prepared to fight fire. Early season in Colorado, to have this kind of fire activity, is unusual. Early season usually catches us not quite prepared, and yet, out of all of what we've been through, out of 3,500 people evacuated, only two homes have been lost. I think that's remarkable, and I think that speaks to how we've learned to fight fire together.

But because of that forest condition in much of the West, this is going to be a long-term proposition. We've got more acres out there than we can ever treat. We will not need to treat every acre. It is important to prioritize and decide which ones are most important for us to deal with.

We've learned long ago in Colorado and elsewhere to fight fire together. Now, we're learning how to mitigate hazard together. It's a little different proposition. We've got a lot more land management issues that are out there that haven't been dealt with before, and now they've become all of our issues. We are all dealing with them together.

And you have individual home owners. You don't have a lot of home owners in the room today. My guess is if we'd have distributed notices west of Denver a little more vigorously, and they knew you were in the audience, more would have been here, but their memory is short, and it takes this kind of—it takes a close fire to

remind most home owners. And even then, everybody isn't convinced.

Some go out immediately and mitigate the hazard around their homes. Most do. Some say, no, I'm not willing to cut those trees. I bought this property because of those trees, and I'm not going to. I can lose my home, and I don't expect any firefighter to take a risk defending my home. And then there's another category that expects the public to be served. It's taxpayer money. They want everything to be taken care of, and that's just not realistic. But we still deal with all of those views.

Likewise, we have different opinions of what we ought to do in the watershed: How far out do you go? What kind of areas do you enter? What type of treatment do you apply? We're working through that in Colorado. The South Platte Large Scale Watershed Restoration project is helping us take the lead on how we're going to make that happen in Colorado. And a lot of folks are paying attention to that, as they should be. We want to make this process that we have enough buy-in and support from decision-makers and interested parties.

It will eventually come down to communities and what the community wants to do and what the community capacity is to make it happen and their will to stay with this long-term. We can help. We can facilitate. We can prioritize. We can stimulate. We can add additional resources, but that community eventually is going to make the decision. So I would urge you, as we move forward, help us pay to that community assistance element of the National Fire Plan. It's not a large element in terms of the fire plan. I wouldn't advocate community assistance at the expense of preparedness or fuels treatment, but it does, I think, propose the hope for whether our success will be realized. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hubbard follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES E. HUBBARD, COLORADO STATE FORESTER

I appreciate the invitation to present testimony on National Fire Plan coordination and federal programs to enhance state and local cooperation.

SITUATION—THE CONDITION OF COLORADO'S FORESTS

Forest condition, or health, is defined by the interaction between three components: resilience to disturbance, biological diversity, and ability to meet people's needs.

Several issues and influences contribute to the current condition of Colorado's forest resources. Those of primary concern are trends in forest cover change, insect and disease cycles, expansion of the wildland-urban interface, and watershed health.

The lack of large-scale disturbance is the single-most important factor related to forest health. The majority of Colorado's forested landscapes are considered to be disturbance driven, which means they evolved with natural cycles of wildfire, insect and disease infestations, flooding, avalanches, and windstorms. Changes in human values and the resulting shift in land-management practices interrupted these disturbance cycles, primarily through fire exclusion and reduced harvesting activity on public lands.

Without disturbances that periodically rejuvenate forest stands and ensure a variety of forest types, ages and densities, many of Colorado's forests have become unnaturally crowded and concentrated in older age classes. This lack of diversity, along with intense competition for resources such as water and light, has left many forest stands vulnerable to insect and disease attack, catastrophic wildfire, and other types of damage on a vast scale. Further complicating the situation is the public's resistance to cutting trees. All these factors combined create a formula for disaster.

It took over a 100 years for forests to achieve this condition and it will take many years of careful management, interagency collaboration, and continued funding to improve forest conditions and reduce the risk of catastrophic fire in Colorado's wildland-urban interface.

GROWTH IN THE WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE

The rapid growth in the wildland urban-interface poses the additional challenge of trying to manage natural resources while protecting lives and property. Currently, nearly 1 million Coloradoans reside in the interface, and the projected growth in Colorado is expected to far exceed the national average. Over the next five to twenty years, Colorado is expected to grow at a rate of two times the national average. In Teller and Park counties, the growth rate in the next two decades is predicted to be approximately 6 percent. Douglas County leads the rapid growth with 191 percent change in population between 1990 and 2000, 60,391 to 175,766. Many of these residents have built homes in the interface, valued at \$181 million in just the first quarter of 2002.

HAZARDS AND RISKS IN THE WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE

The risk of wildfire in Colorado's wildland-urban interface poses a daunting challenge to public, safety, fiscal responsibility, and natural resource integrity in the state. The 2000 fire season brought this challenge to the forefront of public attention when four interface fires along Colorado's Front Range destroyed 74 structures and threatened thousands more, interrupted utility service, and impacted water and air quality. The cost to state coffers for suppressing these fires was staggering, contributing to the most expensive wildfire season in Colorado's history.

The large fires in Colorado this spring have cost \$4,290,798 to suppress. The Black Mountain fire caused the evacuation of residents from 1,700 homes. All indications are that it will continue to be unusually dry, adding to an already volatile situation.

The cost of suppressing unnaturally large and destructive fires in the complex wildland-urban interface environment often presses state and local resources beyond their capacity. To address these critical needs, the Colorado State Forest Service, in collaboration with federal, state, county, and local agencies, as well as private landowners, is taking steps to mitigate the risks of catastrophic wildfire, particularly where lives and property are at greatest risk. Much of what is being accomplished is a direct result of the funding provided through the National Fire Plan.

NATIONAL FIRE PLAN (NFP) PROJECTS IN COLORADO

To identify communities at risk, Colorado's Interface Red Zone map was used (attached).^{*} The Red Zone is based on hazard (amount of fuel/condition of the forest), risk (the potential for ignition), and value (number of homes). This assessment identified 1,609 communities with nearly 1 million residents and over 6 million acres as being at risk from catastrophic wildfire. Figures include private and federally owned acres. Colorado's mix of ownership necessitates interagency collaboration to address the problem.

NFP funding in federal fiscal year 2001 allowed the Colorado State Forest Service to implement 67 projects that ranged from statewide fuel treatment awareness to community based hazard fuels treatments; \$1.5 million was used for fuel hazard treatments, \$167,000 for planning and assessment, and \$366,460 for awareness. All federal dollars were leveraged, some by as much as 10 to 1. Following are a few examples of successful projects that have been implemented in Colorado.

The Baca Grande Mitigation Project received a \$25,000 grant to reduce hazard fuels. They developed a 5-acre demonstration area; treated 47 acres of defensible space on 52 properties, and conducted wildfire information workshops for 54 property owners.

The Larimer County Slash Disposal Project received a \$65,200 grant to reduce hazardous fuels. They completed 198 miles of access improvement and fuelbreak construction and created 21 acres of demonstration projects. The match for this grant was \$294,022.

Through a \$16,561 grant, the Colorado State Forest Service reproduced and distributed 7,500 *Burning Issues* CDs, a high school fire ecology curriculum. Each science teacher in 317 Colorado high schools received a lab pack for use in their senior high science classes. In addition, workshops were offered to train teachers about the effects of fire on watersheds and communities.

^{*} Retained in committee files.

You will hear more about NFP assistance to local preparedness from the County and Fire Department witnesses.

FEDERAL, LOCAL AND STATE COORDINATION

Colorado has chartered a NFP implementation group with representatives of the land management agencies and local government. Through regular meetings this body has coordinated identification of communities at risk, treatment projects, exchange of planning and monitoring information, assistance to communities, and a common approach to delivery of prevention messages.

The land ownership pattern in Colorado and much of the west requires a cross boundary landscape scale approach. All jurisdictions must be included to achieve success. NFP emphasis has been focused on firefighting and fuel treatment. This is appropriate for Colorado's forest condition and interface risk.

As the NFP moves forward more attention needs to be given to community assistance. The sustainability of Federal investment will be dependent on local connection and capacity. Through programs like State Fire Assistance, Volunteer Fire Assistance, Community Assistance, and Economic Action, local programs are enhanced. From small beginnings, capacity grows and sustainability results. The NFP can play an important role to help communities become an integral part of preparedness, mitigation, watershed restoration and prevention.

On a national scale, creation of the Wildland Fire Leadership Council is a positive move. Additional representation from Governors, State Foresters, Counties and Tribes would provide useful perspective in addressing the coordination issues we face in implementing the National Fire Plan.

Finally, through the efforts of the Western Governors, the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture have adopted a collaborative strategy to wildland fire management. This strategy should continue to remind us that reducing wildland fire risks to communities and the environment will mean action across all lands, long-term commitment and full involvement of all parties.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views with you today.

Senator CAMPBELL. Okay. I've got a whole bunch of questions. Let me just ask couple of them before we go on to the local concerns. When you say community assistance, what does that mean? I mean, it's after the fact; right? Money after the fact or resources after the fact?

Mr. HUBBARD. Not entirely. There are several elements of that in the budget. There's the State fire assistance which provides the State some help to work with the communities. There's volunteer fire assistance so that the fire departments get additional funds to be prepared to fight fire.

Senator CAMPBELL. But you're not thinking in terms of community assistance meaning, I don't know, something like repaying for a person's home that lost his home, something of that nature.

Mr. HUBBARD. No, no, not that at all. There is an economic assistance element of that, but that's aimed more at trying to find uses for the small-diameter material.

Senator CAMPBELL. Let me ask maybe you or Rick or both, do some of the things we have already in place in the Federal law inhibit your ability to fight fires? For instance, you don't have to tell me if this was true or not, but I did hear that that fire that got away in Mesa Verde a few years ago that went so fast, I was told that the firefighters were not allowed to come in and fight the fire until they had an archeologist with them. Under some Federal law, they couldn't go in there and deal with it without an archeologist. And they couldn't find one. And it took them a day and a half or something to find one. And during that amount of time, that fire, it just went like pi squared. It just really expanded. It had a high wind. As you mentioned, the speed, they can travel with high wind. Did that actually happen? Was that true?

Mr. CABLES. I can't speak to that. I wasn't here. I'm not that familiar with that particular fire.

Mr. HUBBARD. In a place like Mesa Verde, I know that that's a concern. There are archeological sites that shouldn't be disturbed. It's not the Federal law, though, that gets in our way, it's how we're prepared to respond to it. And sometimes, we haven't anticipated all of those issues. And that may have caused a delayed response in Mesa Verde, but I know we investigated that thoroughly, and I don't believe that's the reason that the acres were lost. However, it did tell us, the next time, it might be, so we better be prepared to respond in the way that that won't inhibit suppression activity.

Senator CAMPBELL. Have we had any trouble with other existing laws? For instance, I remember the story about the man in California who had a home, and the fire was heading his way, and so he cleared the brush near his home to prevent the fire from getting his home, and it happened to be habitat for some kind of a rat that was listed on the endangered species, or it was a habitat, and he got fined a huge amount of money for that. Have we had any trouble like that, that you know of?

Mr. HUBBARD. Yes.

Senator CAMPBELL. Yes? Why don't you give me an example of how we've been inhibited by that.

Mr. HUBBARD. Not so sure, I would say, inhibited, but in some of our mitigation activities, and we had worry about this for private land owners, especially when the State's giving them advice to act, that there may be some endangered species issues. And we have run into that, and that has delayed projects. That has cancelled some projects because of endangered species. But it isn't that we can't still take action, we just have to take a different action or in a different way.

And in Colorado, the Fish and Wildlife Service has been very active and working with us to make sure that we don't run into that problem where we're doing interface hazard reduction. Now, they're looking at their laws to see how far they can go, and we're operating under a one-year agreement with Fish and Wildlife to protect those land owners who take action in the interface. And they may discover that there are some statutory changes that would be necessary, but they've been very good at working with us to avoid that.

Mr. CABLES. And Senator Campbell, just to add to that, when there's an emergency, when the fire's coming over the mountain, we've got a lot of discretion to move quickly. The key is, I think, to have the preplanning and foresight. And you down in Mesa Verde, I would assume, because one of the fundamental values that that park protects is archeological sites, so the purpose that—I think the way to get at this, and this is why these fire management plans are so important, if you do the fire management plan on an area like that, clearly, and on the national forest down in southwestern Colorado, we have a lot of archeological sites, we need to anticipate those and plan for that and say, when the fire bell rings, if the fire's coming over the hill with certain conditions and we have to suppress it, we've just got to have some ability to get in there and move quickly to deal with the fire situation.

So I think that applies there. It also could apply with endangered species, where we have them, and those kinds of things. So I think it's, again, as we get better at this, anticipating those kind of issues ahead of time, getting the agreements in place and the understanding, that's a solution to that, not when the fire's coming over the mountain. But we do—I don't believe we have any authorities inhibiting us when we have that emergency.

Senator CAMPBELL. So you can take, say, mechanized equipment into a roadless area if there's an emergency fire?

Mr. CABLES. If there's an emergency fire that we believe is threatening life and property, we can make that decision.

Senator CAMPBELL. That also made me think, too, when you spoke about the evacuation, a number of people had to evacuate, a lot of these homes on this area, the red areas, are in areas that are just kind of private driveways or very—two-lane or something of that nature. If you have to evacuate, the congestion alone on the routes that you need to go in to fight the fire, doesn't that complicate your ability to get equipment in that you need to fight the fire?

Mr. CABLES. I think, without question, it does. And I believe these two gentlemen that represent the local view probably could talk to that real specifically.

Senator CAMPBELL. Okay. I'll get them. Let me maybe ask another one before I move on, too. You spoke of the high speed the fire moved and the winds, Rick. If a wind, if you have a hot fire and the wind is traveling a hundred miles an hour, can you then assume that the flames will probably be jumping and moving at the same speed, a hundred miles an hour?

Mr. CABLES. Well, the flames can move at the speed of the wind, yes. And again, there are certain situations, you reference that you were up on the Black Hills a couple years ago when we had the Jasper fire, there are certain times with certain weather conditions where we're not going to stop the fire. And even in areas where we've thinned, we're not going to stop the fire.

But the thinning of the vegetation and putting the forest in a condition where it's not as prone to these catastrophic fires for, you know, a big percent of the fire behavior we deal with, we could catch the fire if we had the forest treated, but there are certain instances, and I think Buffalo Creek may be one of those times, where we would have had a hard time catching that fire.

Senator CAMPBELL. There was nothing that could stop it, yeah.

Mr. CABLES. But even on Buffalo Creek, we had a flank of that fire where we had thinned, and we had a flank of that fire where we had done a prescribed fire just the year before, the fire laid down and got on the ground in those areas. The fire still carried, but it wasn't in the crowns of the trees.

So no question, there are things we can do to put these forests in a kind of condition where we can improve the safety of our fire-fighters and also keep the land from being completely denuded when the fire's finished.

Senator CAMPBELL. Thank you. Now we'll hear from Mike Tombolato, please.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL TOMBOLATO, CHIEF, CHERRYVALE
FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT, BOULDER, CO**

Mr. TOMBOLATO. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today to discuss the National Fire Plan as it pertains to the existing Colorado State Fire Assistance Program, and to the Wildland/Urban Interface Cooperative Fire Protection Program. The intent of these programs is to provide cooperative grants, competitive grants to local entities to implement community fire risk reduction activities. The components include reduction of long-term wildfire costs through prevention, hazardous fuels reduction and fire planning for the Wildland/Urban Interface.

And I'd like to kind of speak to it from a local entity's perspective, and how we've dealt with it. Cherryvale Fire initiated funding for a wildland mitigation crew in 1997 and has been a grant recipient from the Colorado State Fire Assistance Program for 4 years. Cherryvale Fire Protection District is one of three known Colorado departments that funds a full-time wildland mitigation crew which implements year-round hazard fuel reductions for the constituents of its districts. The State Fire Assistance Program enables Cherryvale to increase staffing levels to better meet the outstanding needs that we are currently receiving from home owners in our area.

To date, Cherryvale has performed an average of 35 defensible space projects per year, and also treats more 100 acres of wildland urban interface lands with prescribed fire annually. These same crews that provide those services also do home hazard awareness and education with the home owners, too.

The quantity of acres treated and homes treated per year seem fairly low compared to a Federal level, but when we're treating acres with prescribed fire in the backyards, actual backyards of the homes, it takes a little bit more coordination, so you can't move quite as fast. They're a little more complex in that way, so we're literally going in, after we mechanically thin those communities, or the homes, and actually doing under-story burns right next to the home, and in some cases, right up next to them.

Anyway, Cherryvale's wildland mitigation crew also compiles and maintains the district's Wildfire Hazard Identification and Mitigation Systems database. The WHIMS program is a GIS ARC INFO based program that analyzes data including building materials, topographic influences, fuel loading, access, utilities, and water supplies in order to assess each structure's ability to resist ignition from a wildland fire. This information is then given to the home owners so that they can identify things that they can do to help reduce their hazard to their home from a wildland fire.

This database was relied upon during the Eldorado fire of September 2000, in order to brief arriving fire resources and the Federal overhead team members regarding each individual structure's hazard assessment in the community. So we're preplanning ahead of the fire instead of once the fire occurs. We know which one's going to hit the red rock and the green rock right off the bat. And the home owners actually know it, too. They've been informed of this information long before the fire occurs. It gives them an opportunity to make a choice, if they want to move forward with mitiga-

tion and help reduce their hazards or if they're willing to accept the hazards that their home is in currently.

The mitigation crew also provides first line of initial attack services to the community. So instead of having the 10- to 20-minute normal responses that you would have in the communities in the mountains, we have crews that are there during the main part of the burn periods to be able to initially attack those fires quickly and effectively.

In recent years, Cherryvale Fire, along with the city of Boulder and Boulder Mountain Fire Authority, all three of these entities have and do receive State fire assistance funding, have combined their paid mitigation crews in order to accomplish larger mitigation projects. And that has been an important role for all three crews. Sometimes, these projects get so large that we're trying to accomplish that it takes too long to try to get them done, so we've been combining our efforts to try to get these things done in each one of our districts.

Cherryvale has been able to develop and support its wildland/urban interface fire mitigation efforts with the funding and support of the Colorado State Fire Assistance Program. Cherryvale has sought to develop and facilitate local coordination and reciprocity, as well, in these areas. Although tremendous innovations and partnerships definitely have developed as a result, continued Federal support is essential for the continuation of these efforts on both the State and Federal and local levels. Thank you.

Senator CAMPBELL. Did I understand you to say that you had a response time?

Mr. TOMBOLATO. There are those types of response times that do occur in the mountains, it's just because of the permanent location of the fire resources to where the fires are located.

Senator CAMPBELL. Yeah, scattered homes all over the place, it's not like a city block where you just drive down one street and you have the proximity to a bunch of houses. Number one, I would think that the resources, if you got a hundred houses scattered all over the countryside, you can't send a truck to every house, which means, it would seem to me, that you have a lot slower response time. So a 20-minute response time, is that considered fast?

Mr. TOMBOLATO. Well, our response time is considerably shorter than that, but that would be our, that would probably be an average response time in some of the mountain communities, I would assume. I know at least in Boulder County, that would be a respected response time if it was 20 minutes.

Of course, locations and identifying where these things are, from our perspective, we identified our suppression actions to be quick and effective. We try to get there as quickly as we can while the fires are small where we can catch them. Of course, once they get large, suppression efforts become pretty ineffective. But the real key there is trying to reduce the amount of fuels in those areas to be able to manage those fires in a lower intensity situation so we can actually suppress them so we can actually get up there and deal with them.

Senator CAMPBELL. Years ago, in my dad's older years, he had a cabin on our property in California that he set on fire by accident, and I still remember the response time. It was about 20 min-

utes, pretty fast, I thought, but the darn thing burned down in 15, so it didn't help much. I mean, when they got there, it was gone, you know. He did it himself, and to my chagrin, he forgot to renew the insurance policy, too, by the way.

Mr. TOMBOLATO. Sorry to hear that.

Senator CAMPBELL. Scott.

STATEMENT OF SCOTT WELLS, DIRECTOR, CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE, JEFFERSON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, GOLDEN, CO

Mr. WELLS. Thank you for having me here this morning to speak, Senator. I work for the Jefferson County sheriff's office, and that's significant in that in Colorado, the county sheriff is the fire warden for forest and prairie fire. That responsibility would probably mean different things to different sheriffs throughout the State, but in Jefferson County, we take the role both seriously and aggressively in our approach to the wildfire response.

As you can see up here on the map here, this Jefferson County area, a good portion of it is comprised of Pike National Forest lands down at the south end of the county. As you look over here on the other map here, if I can hit it here, in the red zone map, a good portion of Jefferson County falls within what's known as the red zone.

Senator CAMPBELL. High density?

Mr. WELLS. And we estimate that approximately 60 percent of Jefferson County land mass is within mountain areas, and that would be out of a land mass of about 187 square miles.

Jefferson County is home to about 530,000 residents. We have 25 fire departments and fire protection districts within Jefferson County, and we have approximately 1,400 firefighters within Jefferson County proper.

My testimony that I believe your staff has focuses on the impact to local governments for wildfire in the wildfire urban interface. And the impact of local governments can be significant, and, of course, that is driven by the size and complexity of the fire itself.

But the impact will run the range from the continuity of services when the wildfire breaks out, and by that I mean that as public safety officials are beginning their response to the wildfire, they still have an obligation to continue relevant services and relevant public safety services within their jurisdictions. So just because the fire is going does not mean that other calls for service are not going to continue to come into the local dispatch centers.

There are many things which drive the severity of the impact to the local governments, among them are the conditions of the fuels and the topography of the area that is burning, its relationship to home owners and businesses and so forth. You have your weather conditions, that will drive the severity of the impact and so forth.

One thing also that would drive that severity is the accessibility of fire-fighting officials to get to residences to perform structure protection activities and so forth. Coordination of public safety officials would have an effect on the impact and so forth. And then, preincident mitigation by the various property owners also has an effect on how the local governments are impacted in their response to these wildfires.

I don't think that my colleagues here would argue that in Colorado, at least in Jefferson County, we consider a wildfire to be a year-round problem. It's something that we are aware of and are continually dealing with on a year-round basis now.

I was in my current position when the Hi Meadow fire broke out in June 2000. That was a rather devastating fire in terms of acreage burned and homes that were lost. Fires such as that, of course, are always a threat to human life, and the effects can be devastating, and as everyone has said here this morning, far-reaching in their impacts.

Just recently within the last month, there have been two fires that have been very close to Jefferson County, the Snaking fire, which was north and east of the town of Bailey, burned approximately 2,300 acres, and many people had to be evacuated, as well as the town of Bailey itself.

The recent Black Mountain fire, although it was only about 200 acres, had an impact of evacuation on approximately 1,700 people or 1,700 residences. When that occurs, those evacuations, there's many impacts to other local governments, school districts and so forth, to provide sheltering and those sorts of activities. There's impacts to other arms of local governments in terms of information technology for mapping and so forth, public information, public works and those various arms of local government.

Of course, the mission of public safety, fire, law enforcement, and emergency medical services is to provide for the safety of life, and our secondary mission is to provide for the protection of property, as you're well aware.

I guess I would close up by saying that there is an existing partnership between State, local, and Federal authorities as it relates to wildfire suppression in Jefferson County and, I believe, beyond that. And good things have come to Jefferson County from the National Fire Plan. The funds have been appropriated and provided for training as well as the purchase of equipment, and it's through programs such as the National Fire Plan that we have helped there at the local level in sustaining our efforts to provide the wildfire suppression effort that we all do. And that would conclude my presentation.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wells follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SCOTT WELLS, DIRECTOR, CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE,
JEFFERSON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE, GOLDEN, CO

Critical incidents can have a profound impact on local governments whether they are man made or naturally occurring. Colorado has been home to several large and devastating wildfires in recent years. Among these catastrophic wildfires were:

- The South Canyon Fire in 1994. 14 firefighters lost their lives in this fire.
- The Buffalo Creek Fire in 1996. This fire burned more than 10,000 acres and destroyed several residences.
- The Hi Meadow Fire in 2000. This fire burned nearly 11,000 acres, and destroyed in excess of 50 homes and businesses.
- The Bobcat Fire in 2000. This fire burned in excess of 10,000 acres, and 22 structures were lost, including residences.
- The Bircher Fire in 2000. This fire destroyed a large portion (about half) of the Mesa Verde National Park.
- The Walker Ranch Fire in 2000. This fire burned over 1,000 acres, and threatened many homes.
- The Snaking Fire this spring. This fire burned more than 2,300 acres, and threatened many residences.

- The Black Mountain Fire this spring. The fire was only 200 acres in size, but there was a tremendous threat to lives and property. In excess of 1,000 homes were evacuated during this fire.

Wildfires that can be suppressed during the initial attack phase will have less of an impact than those fires that move into the extended attack phase. Therefore, this paper will address those wildfires that are large (greater than 100 acres) and are not suppressed during initial attack.

Wildfire(s) occurring in the wildland urban interface (WUI) impact local governments in a variety of ways. Many functions of local government are effected. Some of these functions are: Closure of public schools in order that they can be used as shelters, the rescue and sheltering of a variety of animals, call back and re-direction of public safety personnel resources, and the involvement of other arms of local government. Among the many factors that determine the severity of the impact on local governments are:

- The time lag between the start of the fire and the first report to fire authorities. Often, fires begin in remote areas and can smolder for days before being noticed.
- The response time, and the response capability of the fire authorities having jurisdiction.
- Existing weather conditions, such as wind, temperature, and relative humidity.
- The topography and existing fuels in the fire area.
- Accessibility of emergency equipment to the fire.
- The location of the fire in relation to developed communities and recreational sites.
- Availability of, and safe conditions for the operation of, air attack resources.
- Effective incident coordination of public safety resources (Fire, law enforcement, and EMS).
- Effective incident management, to include all of the public safety disciplines.
- Effective recovery operations, and the return to normalcy, to include clean up.
- Pre-incident mitigation by property owners.

Wildfire is a year round problem in Colorado. The large and complex wildfire poses the highest day to day potential for impact to local governments. One such impact is almost immediate. As public safety personnel begin to respond to such wildfires, their ability to continue service levels in their respective jurisdictions can be impaired. Continuity of public safety services is essential to the effective overall management of any critical incident. The basic mission of the public safety community is to provide for the protection of life and property. With that mission in mind, considerable effort is expended in alerting people and helping them get to safety. Efficient and effective evacuation of people in danger is paramount. This is occurring as fire fighting authorities are attacking the fire.

Some of the other issues which local governments must address during large fires in the WUI are:

- Emergency medical care for those in need.
- Food and housing for those evacuated.
- Providing traffic control and security for evacuated areas.
- Critical support from the non-public safety functions of local government, such as public works, information technology, and public information.
- Proper staffing and functioning of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).
- Sustaining the overall response for up to 72 hours, or the duration of the event, in the worst case scenario. (The worst case scenario is that a Type I or Type II Incident Management Team is unavailable, or that the fire does not meet their deployment criteria).

Properly trained and equipped public safety personnel are imperative to safe and efficient fire suppression. Large wildfires in the WUI are time, personnel, and equipment intensive. The right equipment, and the right numbers of equipment, is necessary. However, equipment is of no value if there are not sufficient numbers of properly trained personnel to operate the equipment. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is a must for all wildland firefighters and law enforcement support personnel. Communications equipment (radios and telephones) is always a necessity in any critical incident. This is especially true in wildfires because of the difficult terrain. Satellite phones can provide a vital communications link between the incident and support agencies. As the number of people living in the WUI, particularly the "Red Zone," continues to increase, these needs become more pronounced.

Enough cannot be said about effective local incident management. Command and control are essential to assure a safe, efficient, and coordinated response to these incidents. The training and operations of a local incident management team is time

consuming. The impact to the fire departments, law enforcement agencies, and the many other participants, is substantial. At the local level, the best incident management is achieved through interagency participation (local, state, and federal).

The financial drain on local governments during these critical incidents can be enormous. On large fires some of the personnel and equipment costs are reimbursed to the various entities by the state and federal government. However, other costs are not reimbursed, and must be borne by the provider. Some of the costs that are not reimbursed are: Regular time personnel costs, first operational period mutual aid costs, and mileage costs for patrol and other local government vehicles. Sometimes, these costs can be significant.

The National Fire Plan has provided assistance to local governments in the form of equipment and training grants. Equipment that has been received to date has been invaluable in improving the response capability of local governments. Assistance has also been received in the form of WUI grants to help fund the Colorado Mitigation and Wildfire Conference. Assistance such as this is appreciated, and needs to be continued to sustain the interagency wildfire suppression effort.

To summarize, the impact to local governments of wildfires in the WUI is wide-ranging and often significant. The impact deepens as the fire behavior becomes more complex, requiring the whole of the public safety response capability as the head of the fire nears homes and other inhabited areas. Given the population growth in the WUI, there is an ever-present need for personnel, equipment, and training. Continued cooperation among local, state, and federal public safety authorities, as well as at risk property owners, will serve to ease the burden.

Senator CAMPBELL. Did I understand you to say there were 1,600 firefighters in Jefferson County?

Mr. WELLS. About 1,400, sir.

Senator CAMPBELL. Fourteen.

Mr. WELLS. Yes, sir.

Senator CAMPBELL. What number of those are volunteer?

Mr. WELLS. A significant number. I could get that number for you if you would like it, but I don't have it right now.

Senator CAMPBELL. And also do we have anything in place? You mentioned the purchase of equipment. Do we have anything in place that we transfer Federal equipment, has to do with police departments? You know, we have under CTAK, we can transfer different apparatus for local police departments.

Mr. WELLS. From time to time, there's surplus transfers that take place. I was trying to accomplish one last year, but it didn't materialize, but from time to time, yes, sir, there are.

Senator CAMPBELL. Thank you.

Mr. CABLES. And just to build on that, we have a program that we work with the State on Federal excess property, so we'll get, like, excess Department of Defense property, large trucks, and they will be retrofitted to carry water and that sort of thing.

Senator CAMPBELL. States and tribes both can get those through, is it done through GSA, is it, or is it done right through the Forest Service?

Mr. CABLES. We can do it through GSA, but really, we work with the State and funnel that money through them, and they provide grants to, like, VFDs and local fire protection districts to retrofit that property, that equipment.

Senator CAMPBELL. Well, let me start, since you have the mike there, Rick, let me ask you a couple questions first. Give the committee an idea about the forest health in Colorado or the age class distribution of the trees.

Mr. CABLES. Well, I think, as Jim said, Colorado forests are ready to regenerate, and by that—

Senator CAMPBELL. What does that mean in laymen's terms? That means they're almost ready to die?

Mr. CABLES. That means that they are ready to either have insect or disease kill the forest, the larger trees, the older trees, and a new forest start, or fire are the two major disturbance agents. We also have avalanches, wind and flood events. But really, insect and disease and fire are the two largest.

The average age of forests in Colorado are over a hundred years. And for some of the species, for example, like Aspen, Aspen is not a long-lived species.

Senator CAMPBELL. Eighty something, right?

Mr. CABLES. Yeah, it's—80 years it starts getting old, and you get rot and that sort of thing. So about 88 percent of the national forests in Colorado are a hundred years or older, and only about 2 to 3 percent of the forests in Colorado are 30 years or younger. So we've got an old forest—

Senator CAMPBELL. And so would those mostly be considered category 2 and 3, high-risk fire lands or areas where those forests are?

Mr. CABLES. Not necessarily, but we have—let me see. I think I actually have that information. In Colorado, condition class 3, which is the highest condition class for catastrophic fire, statewide, we've got over 7 million acres, 7.3 million acres, that's all lands. The Forest Service part of that is 3.2 million acres in category 3.

And I would just mention and maybe submit this for the record, if Jim doesn't, the State of Colorado put together this 2001 report on condition of Colorado forests, it's an excellent document, and it kind of lays out the situation in Colorado with respect to the forests.

Senator CAMPBELL. Why don't you turn that in. We'll have that included in the record for the committee.

Mr. CABLES. Okay.

Senator CAMPBELL. Of those areas that are category 2 or even more so, category 3, how much of those are in wilderness or roadless areas or other reserves, which would make it very difficult to thin or harvest or to reduce the fire levels?

Mr. CABLES. The information that we have is, of the Forest Service category 3 acres, 3.2 million, about a third of those acres are wilderness or roadless, and that's .9 million acres, 900,000 acres. Of category 2 lands, we've got 4.3 million acres in category 2 on the U.S. Forest Service lands, and about 470,000 acres are wilderness or roadless. And I would say the bulk of those are wilderness.

Senator CAMPBELL. The bulk?

Mr. CABLES. Yeah.

Senator CAMPBELL. Maybe go to Jim now, Jim Hubbard. Is the National Fire Plan making a significant difference in Colorado? Has there been any noticeable real improvement between State, Federal, and local authorities?

Mr. HUBBARD. We already had a good arrangement working in Colorado, but yes, it's made a noticeable improvement. This implementation group for the National Fire Plan that's been formed meets on a regular basis, usually once a month, and it brings all the agencies together, and that's not something we've done before. We haven't looked at coordinating our land management practices together. That's a big difference.

We would not have gotten through the recent fires and only lost two homes and not had more damage if it hadn't have been for the National Fire Plan and the additional suppression resources that were immediately available. Yes, we used severity to preposition those resources, but we had the air supports, and we had the crews, and we had the engines that we would not have had had we not had the National Fire Plan.

Senator CAMPBELL. Well, Mike Tombolato had mentioned some of the things that they have at county level that helps people prepare or prevent or, I'm not sure what the words he used, but do we have that also at State level?

Mr. HUBBARD. Yes. Thanks for asking that. I should have commented. One of the things that the National Fire Plan has stimulated is the coordination, especially with the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service and the State Forest Service, on coordinating our prevention message, not only delivering a consistent message, but to use all of our resources, all of our field operations to do that. And that's made a big difference.

Senator CAMPBELL. If there's some property that is on State land and it joins property, private land, and the fire starts on State land and goes to private land, spreads to private land, does a great deal of damage, what is the State's liability?

Mr. HUBBARD. Well, Scott would like to tell that you we ought to pay for that suppression cost.

Senator CAMPBELL. I'm sure the home owners would, too.

Mr. HUBBARD. Yeah, right. The way that Colorado law is set up, that is a county responsibility. The suppression of wildland fire belongs to the county. The State assists when it's beyond the county's capability. And the counties pretty much take care of 90 percent of initial attack, and that's using those local departments and those volunteers. So it's a critical element of fire suppression in Colorado.

But in terms of financial liability, it does belong to the county, but every governor I've worked for where that is beyond county capability has assisted.

Senator CAMPBELL. What about if a fire goes the other way, it starts on a private land and goes to State land, and as one fire, I forgot which one it was, it might have been set accidentally by a couple of youngsters, what is the liability in that case? Are the families liable?

Mr. HUBBARD. Possibly. I can't interpret that part of the law. And typically, local jurisdictions make some public example for awareness purposes. I don't know if any money actually changes hands.

Senator CAMPBELL. So if there's a lot of destruction of, I guess, if it's private property and spreads to another private property and burns a guy's house down, it's a civil problem then, I suppose.

Mr. HUBBARD. Correct. Yes.

Senator CAMPBELL. Okay. I mentioned in my statement some of the smaller trees that seemed to be growing in numbers on all of our acreage that sometimes it's called the small stem trees. Is that causing much of a problem to State forest health? Or I might ask that of Rick and you, both.

Mr. HUBBARD. Oh, absolutely. That's our major problem. And it's not just—

Senator CAMPBELL. How do you deal with it?

Mr. HUBBARD. Well, as best we can. What happens is that drives up that cost per acre for treatment. So whereas you might use prescribed fire in some places for as little as \$10 an acre, you may spend as much as \$1,000 an acre for the same treatment where you have the small-diameter material and interface that together.

Senator CAMPBELL. Are you using the word "treatment" and "prescribed burn" sort of interchangeably?

Mr. HUBBARD. Yeah, except that where you have a concentration of heavy fuels, typically small-diameter material, you can't use prescribed fire without using mechanical treatment first.

Mr. CABLES. And it's a twofold problem, not only do you have the younger trees which can carry the fire and we call ladder fuels which carry fire and then it gets up into the crowns of the larger trees, but then, it's also difficult to find markets to, if we can do mechanical treatment or some sort of thinning, to find a viable market for that material—

Senator CAMPBELL. All the mills are closed down, yeah.

Mr. CABLES. And oftentimes, even the mills we had weren't able to deal with that small material, so that's why some of the initiatives around biomass, and some of the work we've done here, we've got a couple of pilots we've done here on the Front Range looking at biomass, ethanol production, and also up in Wyoming, at least in our region, Forest Service region, we're looking at some potential cogeneration for power, using this kind of fuel.

Senator CAMPBELL. There is a section of the new farm bill, you know, that deals with biomass under a grants program. You probably knew that. And speaking of salvage, Jim, when you have a fire on State land, is it the general practice of the State to try to commercially market the material, the dead trees?

Mr. HUBBARD. Yes.

Senator CAMPBELL. Same problem of finding a taker is not easy, I guess, particularly the small trees?

Mr. HUBBARD. Yes. Our base industry, forest products industry in Colorado has declined considerably. So now that we have resources to practice, implement practices on more acres, sometimes we're having trouble finding the contractors to do it. And we certainly are having all kinds of problems with the market to support it.

Senator CAMPBELL. I don't know if this is true, either, and maybe Rick can tell me, but I understood that when the Mount St. Helen's eruption took place, and it just killed, whatever it was, 100,000 acres of trees, it was a huge amount, that by the time the dead trees could be salvaged, there was so much Federal red tape to get through that, in fact, there was bug infestation and most of them were lost, they went to no use, anyway; is that true?

Mr. CABLES. I don't know. I know that—

Senator CAMPBELL. Well, then, let me ask Jim, are there any Federal impediments that slow down the process of marketing those dead trees that make it unlikely you could do it within a time to save them, or save the wood?

Mr. HUBBARD. Yes, I think the NEPA process, and if there's objection in that process, it slows it down.

Mr. CABLES. I can think of some examples where we've had dead standing timber or blow-down timber where we were really in a pinch, not Mount St. Helen's, but other cases, to get approval to go in and take that wood out before you had blue stain or some other insect and disease problems, so—

Senator CAMPBELL. What is the time? I guess it depends on the type of tree, oak or fir, pine or so on, but is there a ballpark figure that, once you leave trees down, if you don't do something with them, that bugs or something moves in, blue stain or so on?

Mr. CABLES. For example, on Ponderosa Pond, and this example is freshest in my mind, up in the Black Hills, after the Jasper fire, which you mentioned you are aware of, trying to get in there and do some salvage before blue stain sets in, it's got to be done within a matter of months.

Senator CAMPBELL. Within months?

Mr. CABLES. Yeah.

Senator CAMPBELL. Let me move to Scott, now. Given the fires at Springs, Scott, give maybe a local assessment of the cooperation between Federal, State, and the local departments, and don't worry about hurting anyone's feelings if it's not good enough.

Mr. WELLS. Not a problem. In Jefferson County, I consider the cooperation to be very good.

Senator CAMPBELL. You're better off with the National Fire Plan than without it?

Mr. WELLS. Well, the National Fire Plan, of course, augments our abilities and allows us to do more things, but the cooperation is wide-ranging. We have very many fire cooperators in Jefferson County to include U.S. Forest Service personnel, Bureau of Land Management personnel, Colorado State Forest personnel, and then, very many local fire departments and other entities that we consider our fire cooperators because we realize that that is a wide-ranging problem that we're dealing with, and we need the help of everyone.

Senator CAMPBELL. Let me also get a local perspective on this. There's a lot of devastating effects to a fire, but in an area like Colorado, it's not just the potential loss of life and property, it's also a potential loss in our economy, because we have a big recreation tourism economy.

It's been said by some that they'd like to, you know, that the National Fire Plan should be just spent on prevention and stopping fires and that nature. Others have said, given that recreation and tourism is so important in a State like Colorado or Idaho or many of our mountain States, that maybe that we should also try to use some Federal money to mitigate the loss of jobs and recreation if it's been the result of a devastating fire. How do you feel about that?

Mr. WELLS. We'll, I have not seen any research or numbers on that, but certainly, I would—

Senator CAMPBELL. Well, I don't know if there is any. It's just been suggested by some of our colleagues. I don't even know if you'd have the money to do it in a deficit year, but—

Mr. WELLS. Well, I know that there certainly is that impact. And these sorts of incidents can have, you know, very broad-ranging effects, and people can be affected from a livelihood standpoint. I

guess I wouldn't be in a position to offer any sort of an answer for you, Senator, on that.

Mr. HUBBARD. Senator, if I may?

Senator CAMPBELL. Yes, please.

Mr. HUBBARD. That's where this, the suggestion I have of community assistance does come in, to a certain extent. There's an element of the community assistance appropriation that provides the local counties with the ability to do comprehensive fire management planning in that they not only address suppression response, but they address mitigation, they address prevention, they address fire use, they aid the areas that are most important to them to protect for recreation values, for wildlife habitat values. So they, in effect, develop what could be an economic protection plan for that community, as well, tied to fire behavior.

So I think there's—that's happening in eight counties in Colorado where they're implementing where they did not before this comprehensive approach that looks at all those factors. Then you add to it the economic action assistance that's in the fire plan, and they're able to implement part of that on a small scale. They're able to figure out what to do with some of that small-diameter material. They're able to create a few local jobs tied to the activity of the National Fire Plan.

Senator CAMPBELL. Well, certainly, you would, in gleaning the dead timber. Let me ask maybe a couple of rhetorical questions of Mike about maybe local feelings. I understood that there was a questionnaire done in Jackson, Wyoming, about an either/or kind of a questionnaire. If you only had limited resources, what's more important, putting out the fire on the homes or the forest? And a good number of those people said it was preferable to save the forest and lose the homes. Boy, that's sure liberal thinking in my perspective, but—

Mr. TOMBOLATO. Well, that's a choice—

Senator CAMPBELL. If you had an either/or, what do you do around here?

Mr. TOMBOLATO. That's a choice that's made both by fire managers on a regular basis. In fact, I've had to make it where I've been incident commander myself. When you arrive, you have homes that are threatened, you make a decision, usually, because the resources—

Senator CAMPBELL. Save the home and use the resources there, you let the—

Mr. TOMBOLATO. You have limited resources in county five, and do I do the direct attack on the fire or am I going to stand back here and defend the structures? And when you defend the structures, you don't suppress the fire, you split the head of it and send it around the house and continue the fire on to the next, wherever it's going.

Senator CAMPBELL. In this area here, if we had to measure fire and then measure a thunderstorm afterward, would it affect Golden's, or any of the communities here, the water supply?

Mr. TOMBOLATO. I do not specifically know about Golden. I know Denver water supply has been affected, as it's already been said here. But actually, you know, Buffalo Creek was only one. Every fire has actually, it happened on the Front Range, has now affected

the Denver water supply. Denver water boards have many effects from Hi Meadows fire. The fire that happened in my area in 2000 also, the Eldorado fire, affected that watershed. So I would assume that we'll see continued activities that are going to affect everyone's water supplies in large-scale fire activities with the unnatural level of fire intensity that's occurring at this point.

Mr. CABLES. And if I may, if you think about it, Colorado is the headwaters of the Nation.

Senator CAMPBELL. Sure.

Mr. CABLES. This is the highest country we have on the continent.

Senator CAMPBELL. All but one river flow out.

Mr. CABLES. Any major fire we have in a watershed that destroys the integrity of that watershed has a major effect on water, either a community—

Senator CAMPBELL. Have they tracked, if you have a major fire in a watershed here that eventually goes into the Colorado or the Rio Grande, have they tracked downstream implications, I mean, way down? Have they been able to find sediment, for instance, in Nevada or California that was the cause of something at the headwaters?

Mr. CABLES. I'm not aware of any studies that actually measure what you just said, but certainly, locally, any time we lose a watershed, it's going to effect someone's water supply in this State. That's just the way it is.

Mr. HUBBARD. I think, Senator, when you open this up for the audience, that John Tolber might be able to respond to that.

Senator CAMPBELL. Who would?

Mr. HUBBARD. John Tolber.

Senator CAMPBELL. I might say that one of my big concerns, too, would be trying to find out how we could do a better job from the Federal level of providing resources or through legislation or the normal process we have there, so if, Mike, particularly, and Mr. Wells, you have any additional thoughts, if you could put them down in writing and get them to me, I would certainly appreciate it.

And what I am going to do now is open it up to the community. If there's anybody who would like to speak to this, make comments or ask questions of the people who are the four experts, I say four, because I don't pretend to be one, we'll just take it first come, first serve. If you'll go to the microphone and state your name for the record so we can get that down, if you have anything printed that you would like to turn in, you're welcome to do that, and I'll take that back to be shared with the full Committee, too. Is there anyone who would like to make a statement? Yes, sir. Just go ahead over to the microphone. And if your name is complicated, more than about three or four letters, spell it, too, for the record, if you would.

Mr. YOUNG. Thank you, Senator. My name is Doug Young, and I represent—I'm here representing Congressman Mark Udall, and just wanted to welcome—

Senator CAMPBELL. Oh, we can find you.

Mr. YOUNG. So I just wanted to thank you for coming and thank the committee for coming. Regrettably, the Congressman couldn't

be here. I know he would have very much welcomed to be a part of this and learned a lot from this conversation. I'll certainly take that back and share it with him. But I have brought with me, since he couldn't be here and regrets he couldn't be here, a statement that he'd like to share with you all and the committee and so—

Senator CAMPBELL. If you'll turn that in, we'll include that in the hearing record.

Mr. YOUNG. I will. Thank you again for coming.

[The prepared statement of Representative Udall follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MARK UDALL, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE
FROM COLORADO

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I regret that I am unable to be with you today. I am very glad you have come to Colorado for this hearing, because our state has a vital interest in seeing the National Fire Plan implemented effectively.

That is because Colorado, like other Western states, has been experiencing ever more growth and development in and near forested areas. We are seeing more people, structures and investments placed at risk.

It is this increasing risk to people and property—increasing because of growth as well as because of the unnatural forest conditions that we have created in many forests in Colorado through decades of fire suppression policies—that led to my interest in focusing on questions of wildfire management. And two particular things then lead me to take action.

First, I took a tour of an area west of Boulder, Colorado, called Winiger Ridge. It is near an area where there was a major forest fire in 1989. Following that fire, a number of citizens, along with the Forest Service and Boulder County officials, got together to find a way to reduce the danger of a repetition of such a dangerous blaze. That group's efforts ultimately lead to the identification of conditions that lead to wildfire risks and the recommendation that some steps be taken to reduce that risk. The Winiger Ridge area was chosen as a location to explore some of these techniques which involve some mechanical thinning and some controlled burning. When I toured this area and learned of the issues and the proposed strategy, I was struck by the condition of the forest—a condition of dense stands of small diameter trees—and, more importantly, I was very concerned about the homes and families that reside within this area. These homes and families are literally in the path of a possible major fire that could be devastating.

It was important to identify this Winiger Ridge area because soon after my tour of it, another fire arose there in the summer of 2000, called the Walker Ranch fire. That fire threatened a number of mountain homes just west of Boulder. However, no structure was damaged because treatment with prescribed fire and vegetative thinning resulted in conditions that led the fire to drop to the ground and be more easily controlled. Had this not been done in previous years, the fire could have been much more devastating.

That fire, and other devastating fires in Colorado and throughout the west, was the second event that strongly affected my thinking about this subject. I was interested in what I might do to address the problem and to try to lessen the dangers to our communities in ways that still recognized the need for sound management of forest lands and proper protection for their most sensitive areas.

An early opportunity came when the House took up the appropriations bill for the Forest Service for fiscal year 2001. Reviewing the bill as it came to the floor, Representative Hefley and I were struck by the fact that the Appropriations Committee was proposing to reduce the funding for the wildland fire management account by some \$4 million. In response, we offered an amendment to restore that funding that was approved by the House by a solid vote of 364 to 55.

Then, after consulting a number of experts, I developed and introduced a bill intended to focus directly on our situation here in Colorado. It was cosponsored by Representative Hefley and by Representatives Tancredo and DeGette as well. To put it in its simplest terms, our bill was intended to promote and facilitate more efforts like the Winiger Ridge project, and thus help reduce the risk of a repeat of this past fire season, in the parts of Colorado that are at greatest risk of such disasters. That bill was not enacted itself, but its main principles were included in the fuel-reduction part of the National Fire Plan. And I have continued to work to make sure that this important fuel-reduction work was done the right way and in the right places.

Since then, I have strongly supported the appropriation of funds for this purpose—but I have been concerned Congress has not done enough to spell out appropriate guidelines for their use, such as staying away from wilderness and roadless areas and ensuring that the projects are carefully targeted to protect the people who are at greatest risk from wildfires.

We need to be very careful not to overcompensate for past shortcomings in working to reduce fuels. Fire is a natural part of our forests and eliminating fire from the landscape—as we tried to do for many years—was a big part of what produced the situation we now have. But the risks to people, property and the environment from creating this unnatural condition should not be used to justify a wholesale return to nearly-unrestricted timber cutting, as some seem to want.

We need instead to have a careful, appropriate program of fuel reduction that is based on good science and focused where it is most needed—on the at-risk communities in the wildland/urban interface.

And that is why I have been concerned about the way the fire plan has been implemented so far.

As we all know, the fire plan has several components. All are important. But in terms of reducing the risks of red-zone communities, two stand out. One is assisting property owners to make their homes less vulnerable, by fire-wise landscaping and the like—also known as “defensible space.” The other is fuel-reduction, the removal of brush, undergrowth, and mostly small-diameter trees from forest areas.

Because I had some questions about the way the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the other land-managing agencies have been implementing this part of the fire plan, I joined a number of our colleagues in asking the General Accounting Office (GAO) to review the steps the agencies have taken so far to see if improvements should be made.

As you know, GAO now has completed that review and submitted a report that includes a number of recommendations. I thought the recommendations were sound. So I joined with the dean of our Colorado delegation, Representative Joel Hefley, and our neighbor, Representative Tom Udall of New Mexico, in introducing a bill to require that they be adopted.

The GAO highlighted the need for two things: more and better interagency coordination; and better focus on identifying and responding to the highest-risk communities in the wildland/urban interface area.

So, our bill called for establishment of an interagency coordinating council, and I was encouraged by the Administration’s recent action to establish one.

But additional steps are needed, as called for in our bill, so that fuel-reduction work will focus more tightly on protection of communities in the wildland/urban interface. Last month the three of us wrote to the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to urge that those steps be taken.

Our letter said that, first, the new coordinating council should agree on a common definition of the “wildland/urban interface.” We strongly urged that the council use the interface definition used in our bill: a geographic area where: (A) homes and other structures are immediately adjacent to or intermixed with Federal public lands containing flammable vegetation; (B) the conditions on such lands are conducive to large-scale disturbance events; and (C) there is a significant probability of a fire ignition and a resulting spread of the disturbance event. This definition is based on one used in Colorado by the Colorado State Forest Service, and we think that it appropriately identifies the areas most in need of risk reduction.

Then, we said, the council should immediately begin work on development of consistent criteria to identify the communities within the interface that are most at risk from severe wildfires. And, we urged that top priority be given to fuel-reduction projects that will directly and immediately reduce the risks to those communities. As a corollary to that point, we urged that projects not meeting that standard be deferred at least until all qualifying projects have been completed, to ensure an efficient use of resources and will reduce the potential for controversies that could delay effective action to reduce risks to the most endangered communities.

So far, Mr. Chairman, we have not received an answer to our letter. However, I intend to persist in pressing for more focused implementation of the fire plan, and in particular for deferral of other projects until all that needs to be done has been done to reduce the risks to the most vulnerable communities in the “red zone” in Colorado and other Western states. I hope you and your colleagues will join in that effort.

Senator CAMPBELL. Thank you. Yes, sir? Just come on over here.

Mr. BRAMER. My name is Randy Bramer—

Senator CAMPBELL. B-r—for the record?

Mr. BRAMER. B-r-a-m-e-r. First of all, let me make a very significant disclosure. I'm a lawyer with the Office of General Counsel of USDA upstairs and represent the Forest Service. However, I'm not standing here in that capacity, but rather, in the capacity of a local resident.

I live in Evergreen Park Estates in Evergreen, Colorado, which most recently was in the news as part of the Black Mountain fire. We were approximately 4 miles from that fire and, essentially, had an open space and two mountains dividing us from that fire.

About a year and a half ago, I moved from Brook Forest Road where I was in what was an evacuation area this year and had the experience of having the Hi Meadows fire within 9 miles of that property. So my comments here today are in response to your invitation to have residents talk.

And I guess I'd like to mention two points. First of all is the ability of the State, Federal or local governments to respond to wildland fire. I was extremely impressed with what was done at Black Mountain and what was done in Hi Meadows, and specifically with the ability of the Federal, State, and local governments to coordinate their activities. Needless to say, we in the Federal Government frequently have disputes with the States and the local governments, however, in the area of fire, I think the communication has been especially good.

I did attend the close-out of the Snaking fire, and what I learned from that, I think, is that the State, local, and Federal Governments have learned their lessons from Hi Meadows, and most any mistakes that did occur there have largely been corrected.

In summary, I guess what I feel, what I advised our home owners association 2 nights ago is, I think we have the best urban firefighters in the urban interface that we could ever have. I think they're probably the best in the country. I think the technology is good. I think the coordination efforts are excellent. I say that as a citizen, not as a lawyer. And I truly do believe that. And I think that word needs to get out. I think if you talk to people from Bailey who were most recently involved in the Snaking fire, I think they'll feel the same way, and I think there was a lot of outpouring.

The second point I'd make would be going toward not fighting the fire but preparing for the fire to come to you. And I've only been in Idaho—or I came from Idaho, I've been in Colorado for 3 years. I've been through two of these fires. And let me tell you, it was fine when I was in Idaho and I drove up through low land and I saw the big low land burn and I saw all the black trees, and I thought, wildfire is awful. It was bad enough when Hi Meadows came nine miles away, but I thought, that's nine miles away. Snaking fire, again, hit home. It was close.

Black Mountain was in my backyard. When that occurred, all of a sudden, I was out taking 120 33-gallon bags of pine needles off a half an acre of land. I was out bribing my garbage men to take enough fuel to burn my house down out of my front yard.

And I think the experience has given me a couple thoughts. We need to help home owners help themselves to get this stuff done. Now, I know there's a lot of criticism. We chose to live in a dangerous place, and there's no question, you shouldn't be buying your houses because we have trees around them.

On the other hand, I think the one thing we can do is look more toward outreach to home owners, more on how to protect your house from wildland fire. We have lots of programs on that, but I think library programs, big—as you go to Evergreen right now, and if you put up a sign saying, we’re going to have a wildland-how-to-protect-your-home program at Evergreen Public Library, right now, in light of this fire, you’re going to turn out several hundred people.

Now, again, the folks who have been doing this for years say it ebbs and flows. Removal of slash, places to put stuff that we take out of our own property, in other words, people say, I don’t have—we go to transfer stations up there, \$80 a pickup load, \$60 a pickup load, we might have 20 pickup loads of slash. Getting rid of the materials, but again, the home owners being aware, here is the danger, here is how to create a defensible space.

And the third thing, I guess, that has shocked me is people naively believe that they save all the houses. They will save your house, no matter how little you have done. I don’t think the concept of red tape across a driveway has really sunk into a lot of folks. And I don’t think most people accept, burn my house down. I just live here, that’s a fact of life. I think people just think they will be taken care of, in response to your earlier point.

But again, the more we can educate people, the more we can help them create defensible space through the State, the local, and the Federal system. Hopefully, it will help us to better allocate our resource toward fighting the fires rather than simply having to spend all our time protecting homes that we, the home owners, could have done a better job protecting ourselves. Thank you.

Senator CAMPBELL. Thank you for that very nice statement. Well, I guess the only two upsides I know of a disaster is, number one, it brings people together, and, number two, it improves your hindsight. But as I understood Mike Tombolato to say, there are some educational programs now; is that correct, Mike? There are some ways of—

Mr. TOMBOLATO. Yeah, there’s a number of State and county, even local-level educational programs. We at Colorado State also help sponsor what we—the Colorado State Wildfire Mitigation Conference every year that’s held in September, that’s been going on, I believe, since the Buffalo Creek fire. And the attendance is very good. And it’s been a wonderful conference.

Locally, though, I think, is where it really needs to occur first. And I think the grassroots effort at the fire protection district level and the county level is where it’s most important. And we’ve seen, we have absolutely seen the effects of this. We’ve been doing it for five full years. We were very aggressively doing awareness and education in our mountainous communities, and it’s seen in a direct relationship to other projects outside the district area.

We are, of course, neighboring U.S. Forest Service land and other State and county lands, too, and the ecosystem management and fuel mitigation projects that are occurring on those lands have been supported by our community because they are aware of the benefits of it; whereas, in other communities nearby, there’s been much more opposition to those types of projects occurring.

So we see those effects, plus, we also see almost, in our little district area, we got 80 percent compliance on mitigation on defensible space on our properties.

Senator CAMPBELL. 80 percent?

Mr. TOMBOLATO. 80 percent, which is pretty much unheard of. But again, it has to do with a little bit of hindsight, too, because they've had fire occur. We haven't lost homes, but we were able to prove on our large fire in 2000 very, very drastically that if it wasn't for the area that the fire burned into that was treated, we would have never been able to suppress it and hold it in that place, and we probably would have lost homes. So we've had those indicators in our communities seen very closely.

Senator CAMPBELL. And I don't know how it works at local government, but I know at the Federal level, two things kind of happen; one is that if there's not sort of constant reminders, apathy sets in. We haven't had a fire out here in 20 years, why are they doing that? You know, that kind of a syndrome.

And maybe the other one is that in, apparently, you're doing a very good job of getting the message out, but I know at the Federal level, we hear very often from people that, "We didn't know that program was available," which means there's a disconnect between us putting it in place and the end guy who's going to be able to use it. And that's, I think, partially our fault at government level, any government. We're not letting people know enough of what they can avail themselves of to, or encourage them to do it.

Mr. TOMBOLATO. We spoil our constituents a little bit. I think part of what we do is they don't have to rely on anything. In fact, unless they actually want to get involved, they don't have to. We provide all services for them. We cut the material, pile the material, burn it, and chip it without them lifting a finger.

Senator CAMPBELL. At county cost?

Mr. TOMBOLATO. Well, this is through our fire protection district. And we believe—it was a commitment from the fire district that we believe that the prevention will outweigh anything that we can—

Senator CAMPBELL. So if somebody calls you up and says, I got this terrible brush problem around the house, I'm worried about a fire, will you come out and help me clear it out, you can do that.

Mr. TOMBOLATO. Yes, we do. We go right to the homeowner. We develop a plan for the entire property. And most of our acreage is 35 acres and above, so, you know, we have large acreage tract private particle cells in our district.

Senator CAMPBELL. Well, that may be one of the reasons you haven't had more structures burn down because of that preparation.

Mr. TOMBOLATO. Well, we believe that's the case. We think that the prevention is more important than what we call crew men in the fire stations, so we've dedicated a lot of our money to that.

Senator CAMPBELL. Now, anyone else in the audience, if you have any statements, now is the time. We're about done.

Mr. HUBBARD. While they're deciding, Senator Campbell, may I?

Senator CAMPBELL. Yes, please, go ahead.

Mr. HUBBARD. A couple of National Fire Plan assistance to prevention, National Fire Plan supports the National Fire Protection Association's Fire Wise program, so that gives us a national stand-

ard to use and a consistent message across the country, and every State endorses and uses Fire Wise as a prevention message.

In addition, the fire plan helps us employ what we call prevention teams. So when we have large interface fires, we'll put a prevention team together in addition to the incident management team, send them to the area to help residents understand what's going on, follow up after the fire with residents about what they can do, so you capture that moment, and that comes from National Fire Plan's Fire Plan Support. We're also in Colorado piloting an experiment with the Red Cross. The Red Cross has made mitigation a more important part of their mission.

Senator CAMPBELL. So if people have to be housed in a local gymnasium for a while, you can count on Red Cross to help.

Mr. HUBBARD. They do that. But in addition, they're delivering the Fire Wise program locally through their chapters, and that's a huge assistance to us in getting that message out.

Senator CAMPBELL. Well, thank you. Well, I have no further questions. I certainly appreciate the testimony of all of our four witnesses and appreciate those of you who have come to even just listen if you have no comments.

I guess I'm like every other American, I hate to see it happen, but it does not look like it's going to be a good year this year, and I hope we're well prepared, because even though fire has been one of the greatest discoveries of mankind, it's still, you know, when it's out of control, no man can stop it.

Well, thank you very much. All this testimony will be included in the record and taken to our full committee, and we'll keep the record open 2 weeks if you have anything you want to send in that you forgot to say. Yes, sir?

Mr. DAHL. In Mr. Cable's absence, I'd like to just participate in closing for the record to give you this and recognize your support.

Senator CAMPBELL. And I assume this is under the gift band limit.

Mr. DAHL. And I want you to know, on the back is "Safety First," and this is a fire hat for the National U.S. Forest Service.

Senator CAMPBELL. Safety First, do I have to wear that when I ride my motorcycle?

Mr. DAHL. And I also would like to present you with, this a symbol of the wildfires and the fallen firefighters that we have.

Senator CAMPBELL. Thank you.

Mr. DAHL. And last, a symbol of our Smokey program.

Mr. CABLES. And also, the tanker-based dedication down in Durango, June 30.

Senator CAMPBELL. For those of you who don't know, if I can just brag slightly, I got some money put into our interior appropriations bill a couple of years ago to build a new fire tanker station in southwest Colorado. As it is now, a number of our national forests, particularly the ones on the Western Slope and the southwest, to get fire tanker service, they have to come out of Albuquerque, I believe, don't they?

Mr. CABLES. Or Front Range.

Senator CAMPBELL. It means it's an hour flight down, an hour to load up, another hour back, and we've already heard how fast these things can travel. We're hoping that that base will be open this

summer, and that will be of some benefit to help suppress the fires. And what was that date again?

Mr. CABLES. June 30.

Senator CAMPBELL. June 30. Thank you. And with that, I appreciate your being here, and this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:35 a.m. the hearing was adjourned.]

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