

Private Forestland Restoration is Key to Protecting Colorado's Water Supply

Protecting clean water is an urgent issue in the West, especially given the region's years-long drought. In fact, Western voters are more concerned with water quality and quantity than with unemployment, according to a recent Colorado College poll. Record wildfire seasons are putting more strain on this already scarce resource.

A recent report from the American Forest Foundation (AFF): *Western Water Threatened by Wildfire: It's Not Just a Public Lands Issue*, highlights the important role states can play in empowering landowners to protect the headwaters that supply millions of Westerners with clean water.



Healthy forests are key to a healthy water supply.

Healthy forests act as a natural water filter and storage system. When wildfires burn at catastrophic levels, they can destroy this. While only 31% of the West is forested, 65% of the public water supply comes from these forests.



Nearly 40% of the lands in important watersheds that are at a high risk of wildfire, are private and family owned. This is more than 13.5 million acres.



Western private and family landowners are motivated to act.

Yet, relatively few have taken action to reduce their risk. Three out of four cite the high cost of implementing management actions as a barrier.

HIGH FIRE RISK ACRES IN IMPORTANT WATERSHEDS

State	Acres of Private and Family Lands with High Fire Risk and High Water Supply Importance	Acres of Public (and Tribal) Lands with High Fire Risk and High Water Supply Importance
All	13,578,999	20,796,509
AZ	277,201	2,715,310
CA	7,039,686	5,971,320
CO	636,047	1,397,849
ID	1,008,027	3,856,784
MT	1,761,969	2,308,757
NM	280,778	522,659
NV	191,845	372,534
OR	683,999	645,237
UT	808,134	909,603
WA	293,635	452,419
WY	377,835	1,644,038



AFF RECOMMENDS:



Increase collaborative efforts to engage private and family landowners in reducing wildfire risk by restoring forest resiliency.



Create and enhance state investments to support wildfire risk reduction and forest restoration on family lands.



Prioritize cross-boundary efforts in important watersheds when implementing management plans.

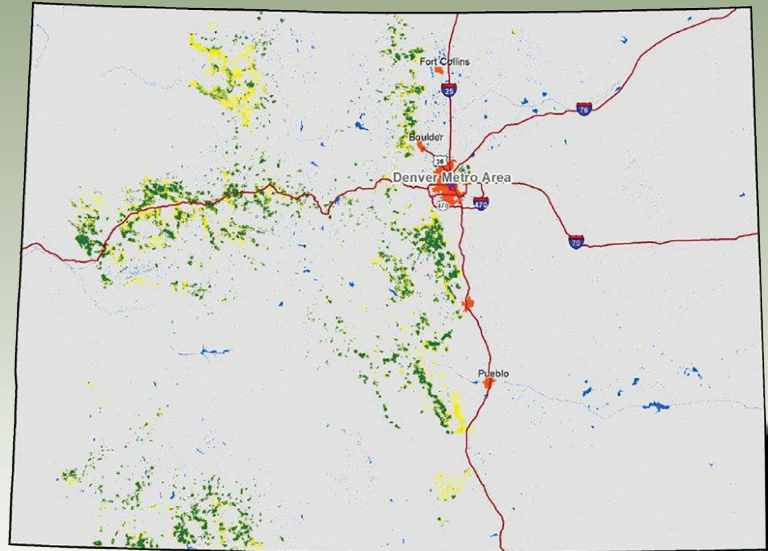


American Forest Foundation

Colorado: Protecting Clean Water from Wildfire is Not Just A Public Lands Issue

HIGH FIRE RISK AND IMPORTANT WATER SUPPLY WATERSHEDS IN COLORADO

- High fire risk and high water supply important areas on private and family land
- High fire risk and high water supply important areas on public and tribal land
- Large urban areas



States have an important role to play in supporting and empowering private landowners with financial and technical assistance to reduce their risk and protect a public resource like water that all Coloradoans depend on.



Colorado is known as the ceiling of the continent with 54 peaks over 14,000 feet.

These highlands capture and store the drinking water that much of the West and millions of Coloradoans depend on.



Since 2002, more than 2 million acres across Colorado have been burned by wildfire.

In many cases, these fires have had catastrophic impacts in important watersheds. One place that has been hit hard is the Upper South Platte Watershed that supplies drinking water to nearly one-third of Colorado's residents. Denver Water, the state's largest water utility, has spent more than \$27 million repairing damage to water supply infrastructure caused by these fires.



While there are more than 630,000 acres of private and family owned land in Colorado at high risk of fire in important watersheds, additional analysis shows that this risk is not uniform across the state. In fact, by focusing in on forest types that are most prone to catastrophic fire, we see that 79% of the risk is concentrated in just 19% of the counties.



A collaborative including AFF, the CO State Forest Service, Denver Water, The Nature Conservancy, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and others, is already working to engage family forest landowners in the Upper South Platte Watershed in managing their forests to ensure that clean water is protected from future catastrophic wildfires. But additional attention to and investment in private lands, coupled with action on public land, is needed to address this concentrated risk.

To learn more or discuss partnerships, contact
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