



Archuleta County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update 2026




**ARCHULETA
COUNTY**
COLORADO

Approvals



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Acronym Definitions	
Acronym	Definition
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
SJCP	San Juan Chama Project
SJCD	San Juan Conservation District
SJHFHP	San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership
CPLA	Chama Peak Land Alliance
BOR	Bureau of Reclamation
NRCS	Natural Resource Conservation Service
CSFS	Colorado State Forest Service
CWPP	Community Wildfire Protection Plan
GIS	Geographic Informational System
HFRA	Healthy Forest Restoration Act
IGA	Intergovernmental agreement
2-3-2	2-3-2 Cohesive Strategy Partnership
LPFPD	Los Pinos Fire Protection District
SCC	Southwest Conservation Corps
CFLRP	Colorado Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program
PFPD	Pagosa Fire Protection District
USFS	U.S. Forest Service
ACSO	Archuleta County Sheriff's Office
WAP	Wildfire Adapted Partnership
WUI	Wildland Urban Interface
SUIT	Southern Ute Indian Tribe

Archuleta County CWPP 2026

1 INTRODUCTION

Archuleta County is located in southwest Colorado with the New Mexico state line forming the southern boundary. Five Colorado Counties (La Plata, Hinsdale, Mineral, Rio Grande, and Conejos) adjoin on the west, north and east boundaries. Pagosa Springs is located near the center of the county and serves as the county seat and the only incorporated town. The county encompasses 1,364 square miles (861,129 acres) from semi-arid country along the south and southwest to the alpine peaks of the Continental Divide along the east. Elevations vary from 5900 ft to 13,300 ft. The bulk of the land in Archuleta County lies between 6000 ft to 9000 ft.

Archuleta County’s population is estimated at 14,589 (2025). During peak tourist seasons, the population can swell to over 60,000. The town of Pagosa Springs is home to approximately 1,800 residents. A significant number of seasonal residents have vacation homes and properties in the county. County records show that 44% of the private parcels in Archuleta County are owned by non-permanent residents. As of 2018, 7,875 single family residential parcels and 5,350 vacant parcels are found in county records.

1.1 Land Ownership in Archuleta County

Over 50% of Archuleta County is in public ownership or Southern Ute Indian Tribal land. The San Juan National Forest covers a large portion of the county with scattered parcels of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and State of Colorado land intermixed. The Southern Ute Indian Tribe is the largest landowner in the southwest portion of the county. These agency- and tribal-administered lands surround and border private lands throughout Archuleta County. Most of the rural subdivision development within Archuleta County has occurred adjacent to the agency land.

Archuleta County Land Ownership	Acres
San Juan National Forest	418,565
Private	298,557
Southern Ute Indian Tribe	130,456
Bureau of Land Management	5,837
State of Colorado	7,714
Total	861,129

Figure 1: Archuleta Land Ownership by Acres. Source: U.S. Census

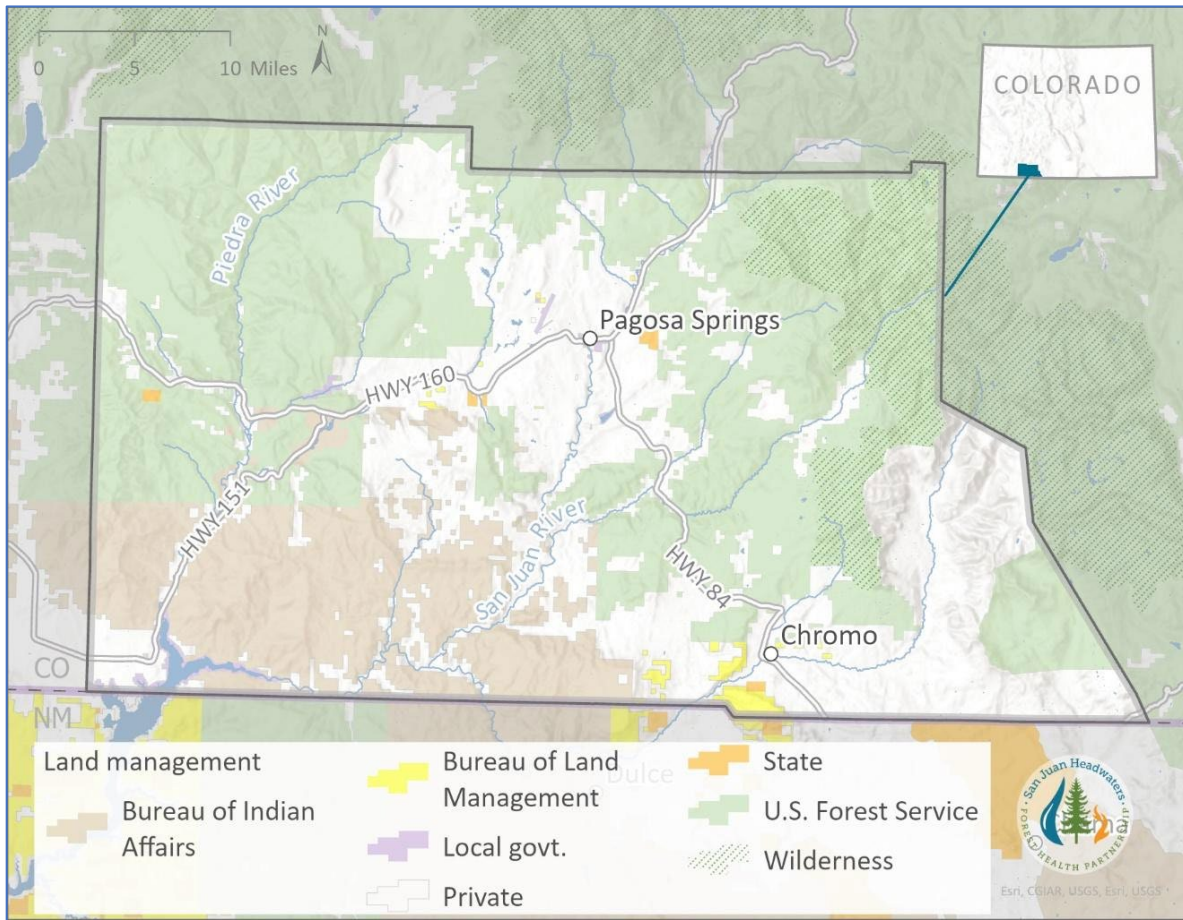


Figure 2: Land Ownership and Management in Archuleta County 2025

1.2 An Increase in the Wildland Urban Interface

Recent development of properties and rural subdivisions throughout Archuleta County has expanded dramatically. The areas adjoining public lands are becoming increasingly valued for their scenic beauty, solitude, and access to recreation opportunities. As development in these areas continues to increase, the risk to lives, property, and resources correspondingly increases. For the purposes of this document, the **Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)** is the zone of transition between unoccupied land and human development. It is the line, area or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels. Archuleta County defines the WUI as an area where development and a landscape with wildfire potential meet. Due to observed ember spread behavior, the WUI boundary extends 2 miles out from the developed area. Nearly all developed areas in Archuleta County are considered within the WUI.

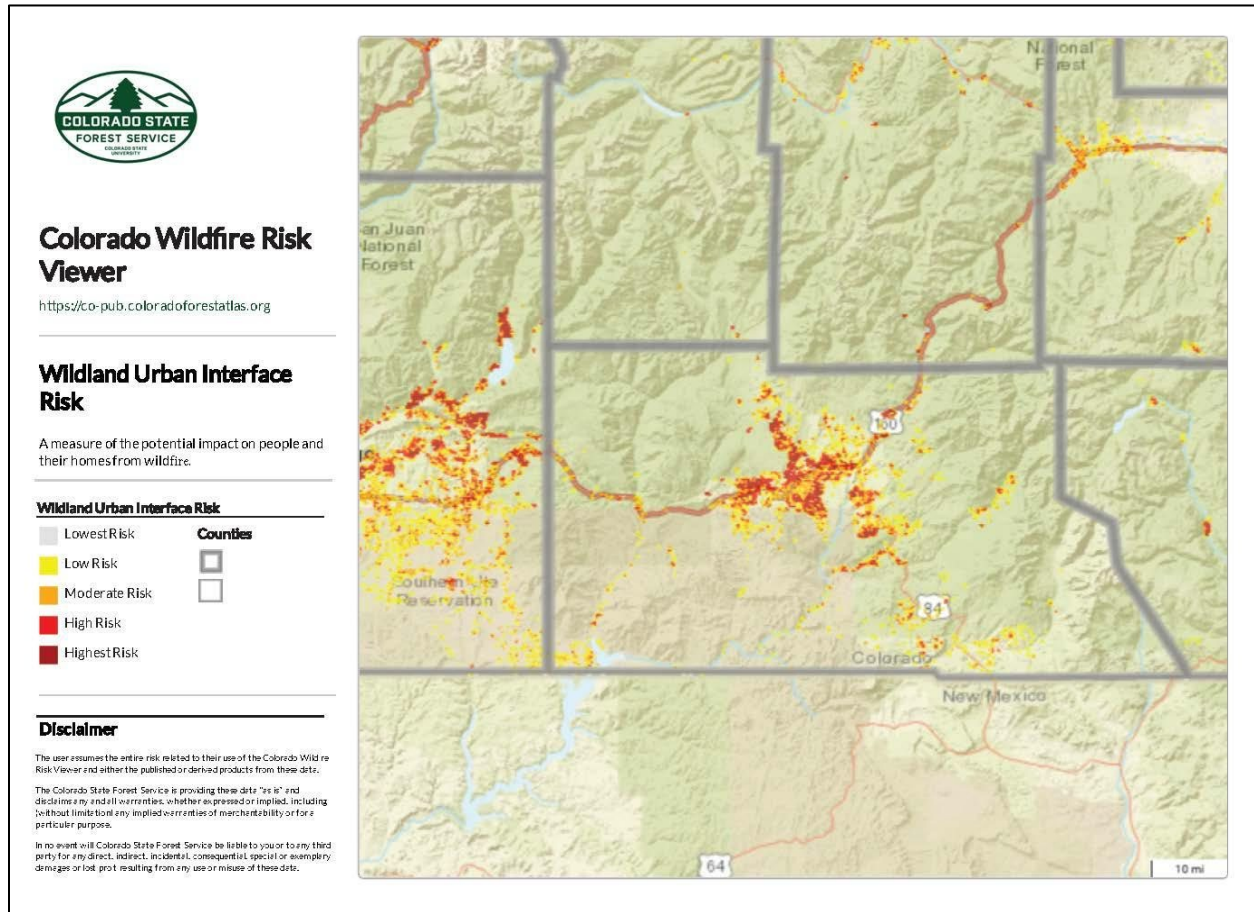


Figure 3: Colorado Wildfire Risk Viewer Map of Wildland Urban Interface Risk 2025

1.3 Higher Risk in Wildfire Frequency

The risk of wildland fire occurrence in Archuleta County is very high. Historic records of fire origins indicate starts occur every year. June through August have the highest frequency of starts, most caused by lightning. Multiple starts in 24-to-48-hour periods are common during these months. During years of low winter/spring moisture, the threat of human-caused fire starts becomes critical by June. All these factors combined cannot be ignored.

Most of the development in Archuleta County has occurred in ponderosa pine forests, with a Gambel oak understory. Subdivisions have also been built in mixed-conifer forest and piñon/juniper. These forest types have natural fire regimes of frequent to periodic fire. The natural historic fire regime of ponderosa pine is frequent, low-severity fire. Historically, pre-1880 ponderosa pine forests burned every 5 to 15 years on average. Typical fires were surface fires that cleaned up the forest floor and kept forest structure open and park-like, with minimal to few ladder fuels. After over a century of fire suppression, open park-like forests have filled in and are now dense, closed canopy forests where ladder fuels threaten crown fires every season. Gambel oak, one of the most common native ladder fuels, grows and spreads rapidly across much of the county in elevations below the high elevation spruce/fir forests.

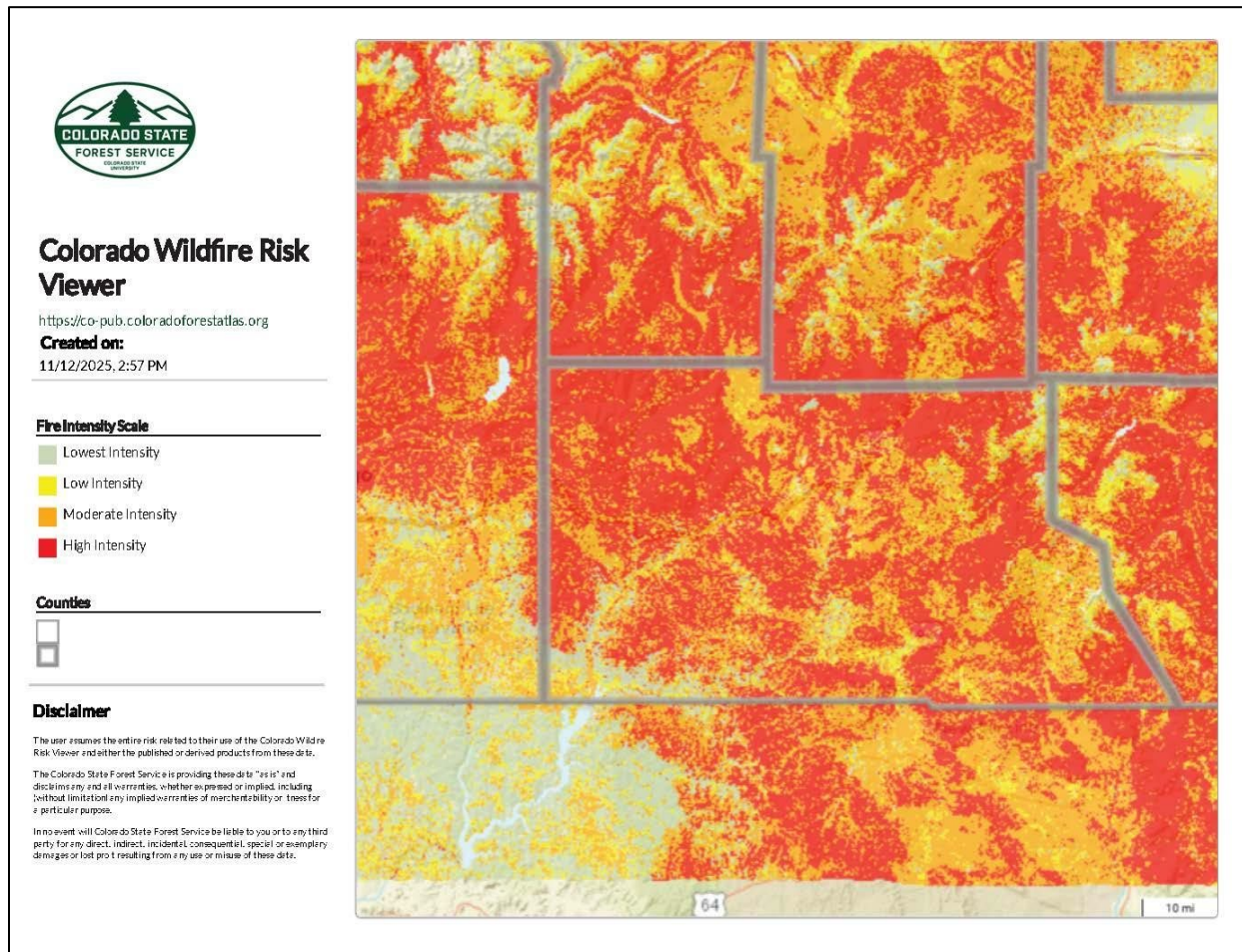


Figure 4: Archuleta County Fire Intensity Scale in the Event of a Wildfire 2025

Areas of pinon/juniper have also seen an increase in fuel density due to fire suppression. Fires in this forest type were usually very infrequent, with up to 200-300 years in between severe burns. Pinon/juniper forest types have continued to experience more frequent high intensity fires due to an increase in fuel densities and an increase in drought conditions.

A similar situation exists in warm-dry mixed conifer. Cool-moist mixed conifer forests do not burn as often. They have a periodic, mixed-severity fire regime. Fires occurred every 14-63 years on average. Larger scale crown fires are natural occurrences in this forest type and occur about once a century.

Fire intervals in the higher elevation spruce/fir forest can be 300 years or longer. Much of this high elevation forest in Archuleta and neighboring Mineral and Hindsdale counties suffered high mortality due to bark beetles over ten years ago. Although these trees have long since dropped their highly flammable needles, it is anticipated that the dry, dead wood would allow for a hotter fire with increased flame lengths should a wildfire occur.

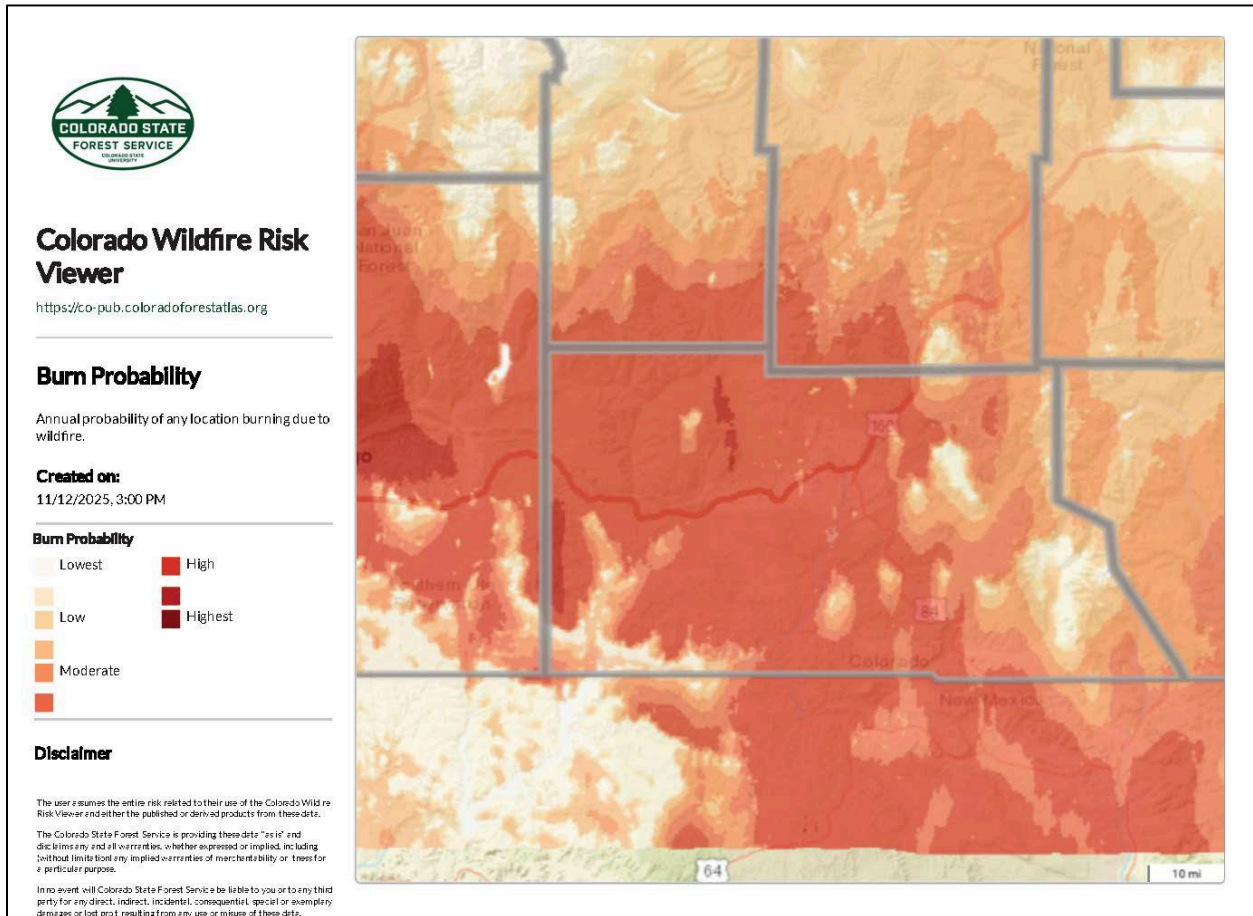


Figure 5: Burn Probability in Archuleta County in the event of a Wildfire 2025

With current conditions and the continued drought conditions, Archuleta County will continue to experience more severe and frequent wildland fires. Much of the areas that are identified as high risk for fire intensity and burn probability are also overlaid with the WUI. Below is a table of the most recent severe wildfires in Archuleta County. The most recent Oak Fire (2025) threatened over 2,000 structures.

Fire and Year	Acres Burned
Oak Fire (2025)	75
Snow Ranch Fire (2024)	385
Coal Mine Fire (2023)	286
Mill Creek Fire (2023)	286
Mill Creek 2 Fire (2023)	146
Trail Springs Fire (2023)	1,303
Quartz Ridge Fire (2023)	2,850
Bear Creek Fire (2023)	1,102
Dry Lake Fire (2023)	1,372
Chris Mountain Fire (2023)	511
Plumtaw Fire (2022)	721
Horse Fire (2018)	700
Eight Four Two Fire (2017)	1,000
West Fork Fire (2013)	58,600-plus adjacent counties
Little Sand Fire (2012)	22,400

Figure 6: Recent Fires in Archuleta County

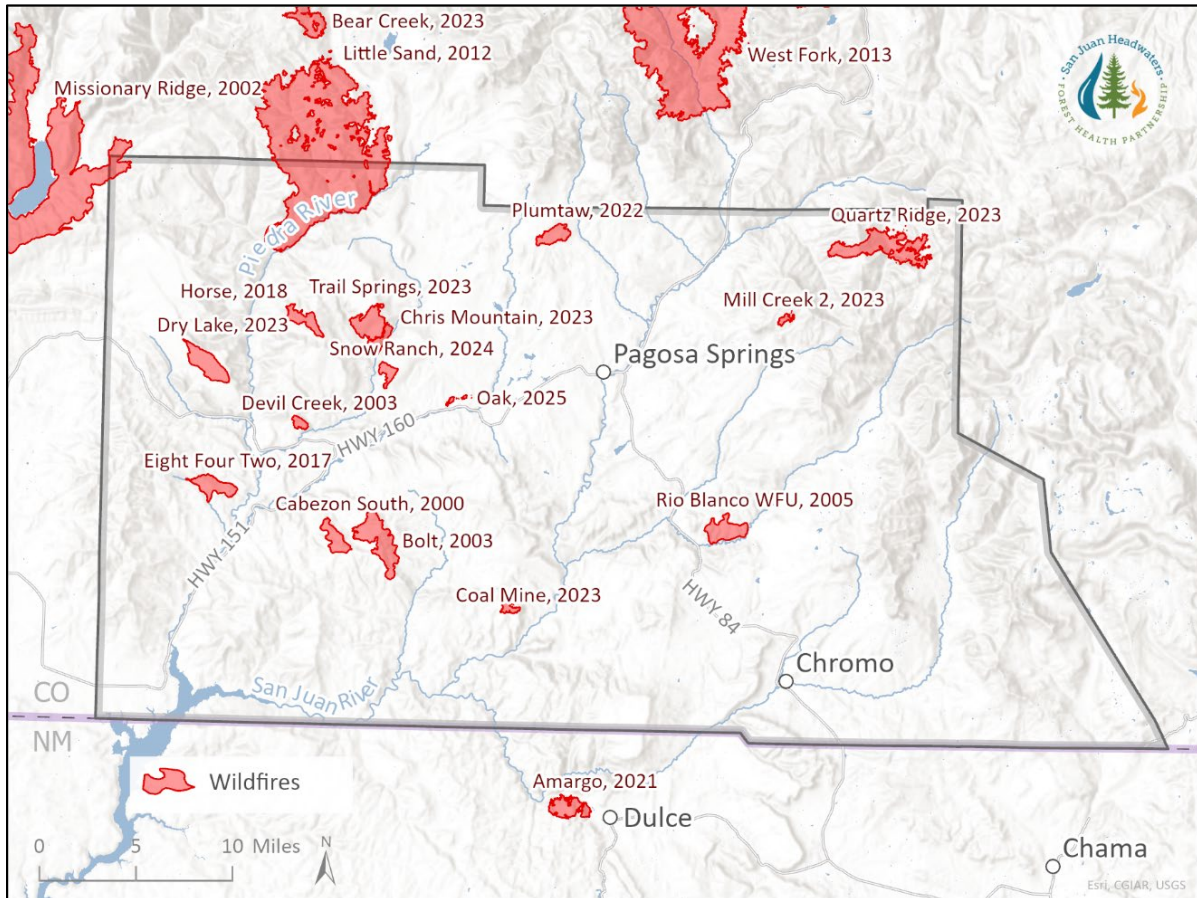


Figure 7: Map of Recent Fires in Archuleta County

1.4 Population Vulnerabilities

In 2020, Colorado State University developed the [Wildfire Social Vulnerability Index \(WFSVI\)](#), which recognizes four main categories of vulnerability: socioeconomic status, household composition/ disability, minority status/ language, and housing/transportation. In the event of a catastrophic wildfire, these groups would be less likely to react efficiently and safely, or recover easily. According to the Colorado Wildfire Risk Viewer, the state has categorized more than half of Archuleta County to fit within these criteria. Along with living in the WUI, these populated areas may have difficulty with access/egress due to limited evacuation routes, limited cell service in neighborhoods, and being a generally older population.

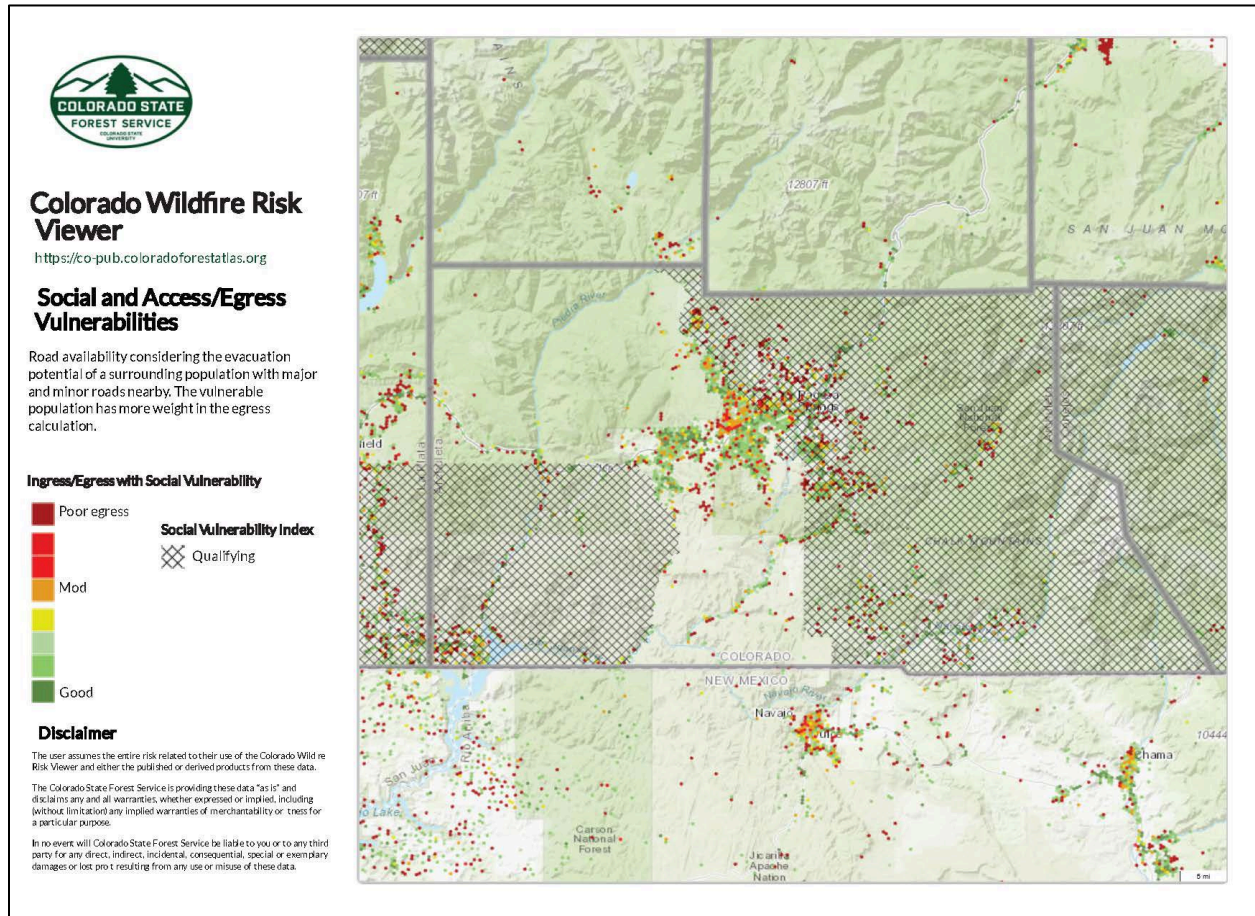


Figure 8: Social Vulnerabilities and Access/Egress Vulnerabilities in Archuleta County

2 CWPP - Authorization and Process

In response to numerous large wildland fires across most of the western States in 2000 and 2002, the U.S. Congress authorized the National Fire Plan in 2000 and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) in 2003. Under this legislation, local communities are encouraged to develop and implement forest management plans and hazardous fuel reduction projects. Key to the planning of preventive actions is detailed mapping and cooperative efforts by all stakeholders and land owners. U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are directed by HFRA to give consideration to the priorities of local communities as they develop and implement these plans. This legislation initiated the development of **Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP)**.

In Archuleta County, this process started in 2001 with numerous cooperators developing the **Community Fire Plan**. This plan, developed as a component of the National Fire Plan, identified wildland fire risk areas and developed goals and action recommendations throughout Archuleta County. Building on this plan, Archuleta County developed a CWPP in 2008. The plan was updated in 2019. The current update was begun in 2026. Steps taken to complete this CWPP include:

- Holding planning meetings with land management agencies, wildfire responders and local forest collaborative groups.
- Discussing and sharing planning information with the county residents.
- Utilizing forest, watershed and fire behavior mapping.
- Reviewing Potential Operational Delineations (PODs) and their impact on the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

2.1 Partners in this Updated CWPP

- Pagosa Fire Protection District (PFPD)
- Los Pinos Fire Protection District (LPFPD)
- Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS)
- United States Forest Service (USFS)
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- Archuleta County Sheriff's Office (ACSO)
- Archuleta County Administration
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe (SUIT)
- Bureau of Indian Affairs, Southern Ute Agency
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
- San Juan Conservation District
- San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership (SJHFHP)
- Wildfire Adapted Partnership (WAP, formerly FireWise of SW CO)
- Town of Pagosa Springs
- Chama Peak Land Alliance
- Archuleta County CSU/Extension Office
- Property Owners Associations (POAs)
- Private and Commercial Landowners
- Private Contractors – specializing in fuels thinning and forest health

3 Fuels Reduction and Forest Management Planning

Several Efforts exist on both public and private lands for reducing fuels and managing forests. These efforts are often collaborative and cross-boundary in nature, and several focus on the priority areas as outlined in this CWPP.

3.1 San Juan National Forest

The San Juan National Forest completed a new [Land Resource Management Plan in 2013](#). This plan identifies desired landscape conditions for forest vegetation management and standards and guidelines for fire, fuels and timber management activities across the Pagosa and Columbine Ranger Districts of the San Juan National Forest within Archuleta County. The Pagosa and Columbine Districts each host a fire and fuels management team. These fuels organizations were first staffed in their current form in spring 2019. Each district fuels team annually updates a 5-year action plan consisting of planned prescribed fire and non-commercial mechanical fuels (brush mowing, hand thinning and mastication) treatments consistent with the 2013 Forest Plan guidance.

The San Juan National Forest also hosts a combined Pagosa and Columbine District timber group. This team is primarily responsible for planning and implementation of forest restoration contracts and commercial timber harvests across both districts, although many contracts implemented by the timber organization involve non-commercial fuels reduction work.

A separate 5-year action plan for timber management activities for the Pagosa and Columbine districts is updated annually and complements the work completed by the two Districts. Both fuels and timber 5-year action plans are continually evolving based upon available resources, funding, opportunities and stakeholder input. For the most current 5-year action plans contact the Pagosa and Columbine Ranger Districts or the San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership. A small portion of Rio Grande National Forest falls within Archuleta County boundaries.

3.2 Private Land Fuels Reduction efforts

In Archuleta County, [Wildfire Adapted Partnership \(WAP\)](#), the [Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\)](#), the [Chama Peak Land Alliance](#) and the [Colorado State Forest Service](#) are the leading entities in private land fuel reduction. Wildfire Adapted Partnership focuses on the 100 ft zone around structures, and offers a cost-share program for homeowners to complete a scope of work that is up to [CSFS HIZ Guidelines](#). WAP staff have NFPA certifications, write the scope of work, and inspect projects for completion. They also provide cost-share funding for larger community projects to improve safety and access/egress of communities. NRCS offers assistance to larger landowners, providing expertise in rangeland, riparian, and forestry mitigation. In the past 5 years (2021-2025),

WAP completed just under 1,100 acres, and NRCS completed just over 1,500 acres of mitigation and restoration projects.

3.3 Cross Boundary Fuels Reduction and Treatments

Through identification of prioritization through partner and stakeholder input, several entities continue to do fuels reductions treatments across scale in Archuleta County. The San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership [has identified areas of high priority for treatment](#) based on resources at risk, as well as properties identified by the two CFLRPs in Archuleta County and USFS PODs (Potential Operational Delineations). Small parcel Home Ignition Zone fuels reduction prevents structure ignitions and protects lives and property, which on a larger scale, Gambel oak reduction and forest thinning on larger private parcels and public parcels prevents spread of wildfire into neighborhoods and communities. Due to the fact that Gambel oak and juniper can grow back quickly, retreatment and maintenance are taken into account when doing initial treatments.

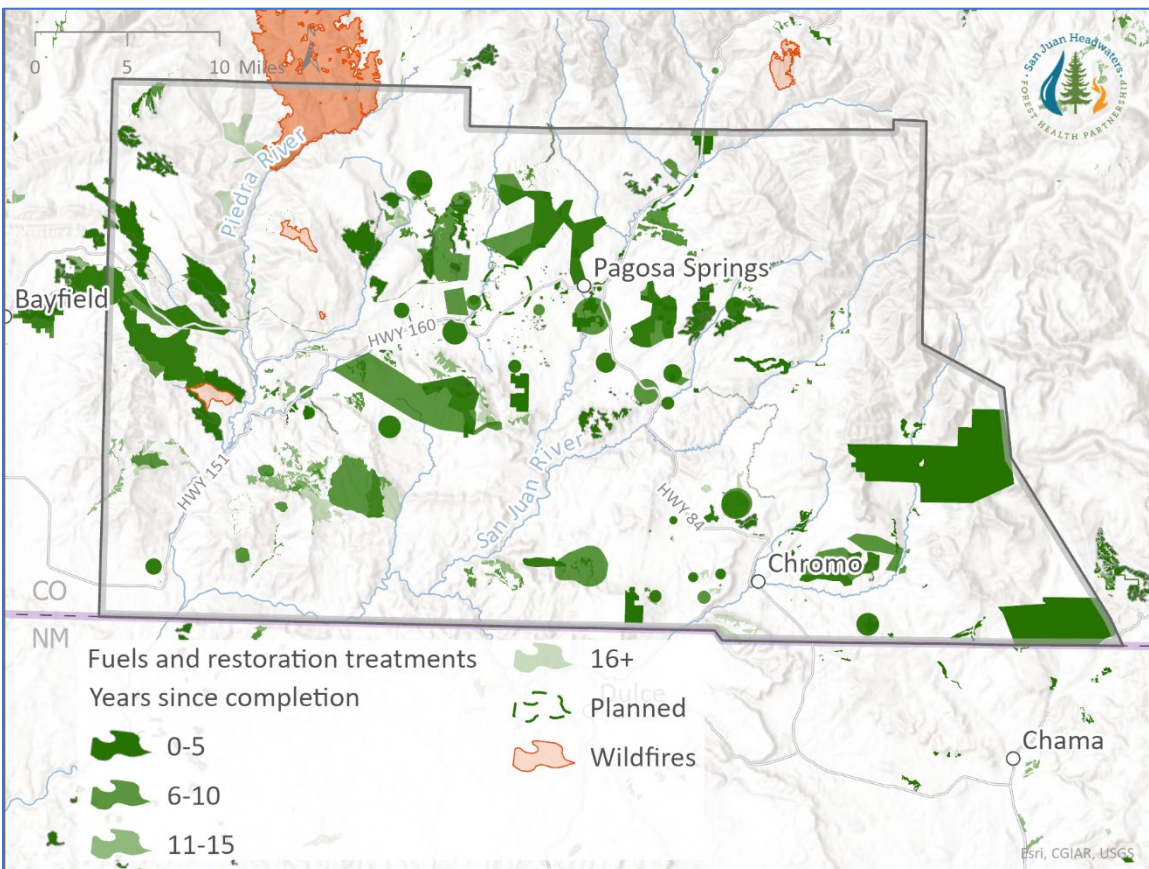


Figure 9: Cross-Boundary Fuels Reduction Treatments as of 2025

4 Archuleta County Firefighting and Prevention Capacity

4.1 Private Lands

On private lands the Archuleta County Sheriff is the Fire Marshall. All land in Archuleta County requires a permit to control burn. This ordinance shall apply throughout unincorporated areas of Archuleta County, including public, private, and state lands.

The purpose of this ordinance is to preserve and protect the public health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Archuleta County, Colorado, by restricting open fires and open burning in the unincorporated areas of Archuleta County during times of high fire danger and to provide a permitting system that will (1) allow and regulate open and safe burning of slash; (2) inform persons of considerations for the appropriate, safe, and effective use of fire as a tool; and (3) reinforce knowledge of local requirements of homeowner associations, special districts having fire jurisdiction, and county ordinances to increase public awareness and protect the public health, safety, and welfare.

4.2 Fire Response

The following departments and agencies are involved in fire management and fire prevention activities in Archuleta County:

- Archuleta County Sheriff's Office
- Pagosa Fire Protection District
- Los Pinos Fire Protection District
- Upper Pine Fire Protection District
- United States Forest Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control

These organizations work with each other and community partners to share resources and information. Formal Mutual Aid Agreements are in place that allow for interagency response to fire emergencies. Partnerships have developed related to fire prevention and demonstration projects, firefighting, public education and accessing resources such as equipment, grants and training.

The Archuleta County Sheriff is the Fire Marshall of the County. Beyond the fire districts, the Archuleta County Sheriff's Office is responsible. The Sheriff's Office provides a fire crew (seasonally augmented) and engines funded through Archuleta County and grants. One of the engines and one of the tenders is provided by the Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) through agreement with the Sheriff's Office.

Pagosa Fire Protection District includes the Town of Pagosa Springs, the Pagosa Lakes Subdivisions, Aspen Springs Subdivision, south along Highway 84 to Loma Linda and Alpine Lakes Subdivisions, and the area around Chromo.

Los Pinos Fire Protection District covers private lands in the southwest portion of Archuleta County and southeast La Plata County. The community of Arboles, Navajo State Park and Piedra Park Subdivision are within the district.

Upper Pine Fire District covers a small area along the western boundary of Archuleta County.

Mutual Aid agreements are in place between Archuleta County, Pagosa Fire Protection District, the San Juan National Forest and neighboring fire districts for times when assistance is needed.

Archuleta County Primary Fire Responder Capacity	
Resource	Number Available
Archuleta County Sheriff's Office	
Red-Carded personnel (Includes 3 at Road & Bridge)	10
Seasonal Firefighters	2
Type 6 Engine	2
Type 4 Engine	1
Pagosa Fire Protection District	
Stations (One is manned 24/7)	7
Full Time Firefighters (Wildland Trained)	21
Volunteer Firefighters (Wildland Trained)	41
Type 1 Engine	7
Type 3 Engine	1
Type 1 Tender	6
Type 6 Wildland Trucks	3
Ladder Truck	1
Heavy Rescue Truck	1
Support Vehicles	6
Pagosa Ranger District	
Fire Management Officers	3
10 Person Suppression Module	1
5 Person Fuels Module	1
Type 6 Engine	1
Los Pinos Fire Protection District	
Archuleta County Stations (Manned 24/7)	1
Full Time District Firefighters (Wildland Trained)	24
Volunteer District Firefighters	6
Seasonal Wildland Firefighters	8
Type 1 Engines (1 in Archuleta County)	4
Type 3 Engine	1
Type 6 Brush Trucks (1 in Archuleta County)	5
Ladder Truck	1
Water Tenders (1 in Archuleta County)	5

Figure 10: Fire Fighting Capacities in Archuleta County 2025

The Archuleta County Hazard Mitigation Plan for 2023-2028 has details relating to all potential hazards and responses, including wildfire. It can be accessed at <https://sheriff.archuletacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Multi-Hazard-Mitigation-Plan.pdf>

4.3 Southern Ute Tribal Lands

On Southern Ute Indian Tribal lands, the Bureau of Indian Affairs provides wildland fire protection. Much of the area managed is dotted and interspersed with private lands and some of it borders state land (Navajo Lake State Park). The largest wildland fires in recent history within Archuleta County have been lightning-caused fires that started on Southern Ute Tribal Lands (Dipping Vat Fire, 1996, 17,000 acres; Bolt Fire, 2003, 2200 acres; Coal Mine Fire, 2023, 286 acres)

4.4 On USFS and BLM Lands

On USFS and BLM lands, the San Juan National Forest is organized into two Ranger Districts within Archuleta County. The Pagosa Ranger District manages the eastern and northern reaches of these lands within Archuleta County generally east of the Piedra River. The Columbine Ranger District manages the western portion of these public lands from Bayfield. BLM lands are managed from the Tres Rios Field Office in Dolores, but initial attack on BLM lands within Archuleta County is generally completed by USFS resources through coordination with the Dolores Public Lands National Forest Ranger Districts, which adjoin in the Piedra River drainage, both maintain wildland engines, suppression crews, and host a fuels management organization. Additional fire qualified personnel come from other resource staff in the districts.

During periods of very high to extreme fire danger (usually June into July), national resources including additional engines, crews, and contract helicopters are pre-staged at these districts. The 25-person San Juan Interagency Hotshot Crew is stationed in Durango and is frequently utilized on wildland fires in Archuleta County. This crew is a national resource crew and is subject to being called on assignments away from this area at any time. The Durango Interagency Fire Dispatch Center is located at the SJNF Supervisor's Office in Durango and is responsible for dispatching wildland fire resources. In addition, an air tanker base is located at the Durango-La Plata County Airport and single-engine air tanker (SEAT) bases are located at the Cortez Airfield and in Dulce, NM. Aircraft are dispatched through The Durango Interagency Fire Dispatch Center.

A small portion of Rio Grande NF is within Archuleta County boundaries and is accessible from Antonito, CO or Chama, NM

5 Archuleta County CWPP Education, Outreach and Collaborative Efforts

The following organizations have been and will continue to do the majority of the education and outreach to the community.

5.1 The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS)

The [Colorado State Forest Service \(CSFS\)](#) mission is “to achieve stewardship of Colorado’s diverse forest environments for the benefit of present and future generations.”

The CSFS’s activities include:

- Providing leadership, resources and guidance to accomplish forest management
- Promoting wildfire mitigation projects and community planning
- Assisting county governments and community organizations in assessing wildfire hazards
- Sharing information with diverse audiences on the importance of mitigating hazards on their forested lands to help protect lives and property

5.2 San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership (SJHFHP)

[San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership](#) is a collaborative group of people representing regional business interests, conservation organizations, local and state governments, federal agencies, recreation interests, ranchers, homeowner associations, scientists, and any interested citizens. Their mission is to collaborate with the goal of improving the health of forests, watersheds, and communities in the headwaters of the San Juan River.

Headwater’s activities include:

- Strengthen regional understanding of methods for improving forest health and watershed resilience
- Leverage collaborative processes and projects to secure state and federal funds
- Broaden knowledge of forest conditions and challenges
- Generate viable management approaches that support ecological and socio-economic needs
- Initiate projects to address identified needs, such as wildfire risk reduction and forest health improvement
- Monitor treatments to guide adaptive management practices

5.3 2-3-2 Cohesive Strategy Partnership

The [2-3-2 Cohesive Strategy Partnership \(2-3-2\)](#) is a conglomerate of place-based collaboratives – a team of teams – whose geography encompasses 2 watersheds, 3 rivers, and 2 states. Their mission aims to facilitate cooperation and information-sharing between organizations working toward watershed and landscape resilience in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico. Partners of the 2-3-2 are committed to integrating science and Indigenous knowledge to inform management strategies that support and enhance wildlife, aquatic health, and human communities alongside resilient forests and healthy watersheds.

Activities of 2-3-2 include:

- Coordinate efforts to reestablish natural fire regimes
- Promote resilient landscapes that protect and improve water and other natural resources for humans, wildlife, and plants
- Support the economic and cultural resilience of communities within and connected to the 2-3-2 landscape
- Coordinate and support Rio Chama CFLRP efforts

5.4 Wildfire Adapted Partnership

[Wildfire Adapted Partnership \(WAP\)](#) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit who inspires, educates, and enables individuals and communities to protect lives and property from wildfire.

WAP's activities include:

- Work with our neighbors and agency partners to create fire adapted communities.
- Assist local residents in creating defensible space through evaluation, planning, and procuring grant funds to help offset the cost to landowners for mitigation work.
- Assist communities in planning and implementing mitigation projects.
- Use volunteer Neighborhood Ambassadors to act as liaisons between residents and wildfire experts. As of early 2026, there are currently 37 Ambassadors representing 21 communities within Archuleta County
- Develop Community Wildfire Risk Assessments and Action Plans
- Promote and coordinate the National Fire Protection Association Firewise USA® Recognition Status program for local communities.

5.5 Southwest Colorado Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (SW CO CFLRP) and Rio Chama Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (Rio Chama CFLRP)

The purpose of the [Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program \(CFLRP\)](#) is to encourage the collaborative science-based ecosystem restoration of priority forest landscapes. There are two CFLRPs within Archuleta County, the SWCO CFLRP and the Rio Chama CFLRP. The purpose of the both programs is to encourage the collaborative, science-based ecosystem restoration of priority forest landscapes and:

- encourage ecological, economic, and social sustainability;
- leverage local resources with national and private resources;
- facilitate the reduction of wildfire management costs, including through re-establishing natural fire regimes and reducing the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire;
- demonstrate the degree to which various ecological restoration techniques achieve ecological and watershed health objectives; and,
- encourage utilization of forest restoration by-products to offset treatment costs, to benefit local rural economies, to and improve forest health.

SWCO CFLRP

In 2022, the USDA Forest Service announced that the San Juan National Forest will receive funding annually for restoration work through the [SW CO CFLRP](#), which covers 2.3 million acres across Southwest Colorado, with its Eastern most boundary falling within Archuleta County. The program enables the SJNF to adapt to future disturbance while retaining ecosystem function, productivity, and ecosystem service. Headwaters created a [Priority Fact Sheet](#) that details specific actions and priority areas for the CFLRP.

Rio Chama CFLRP

Also awarded in 2022, the USDA Forest Service awarded the [Rio Chama CFLRP](#), which covers 3.81 million acres across Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico. Around 50% of the land in the Rio Chama CFLRP is managed by the United States Forest Service. The remaining land is private, state, tribal, and municipal along with land managed by other federal agencies. Water is the critical connection between the upstream headwaters in the San Juan Mountains and millions of residents in downstream communities who rely on that water. This project, largely in the Southeastern portion of Archuleta County, focuses on subgoals:

- Increase the forest resilience to disturbances like wildfire, insects, disease, and climate change
- Restore watershed and riparian areas to improve water quality and watershed function
- Improve range conditions and wildlife habitat and connectivity
- Support local rural economies and create jobs by utilizing restoration byproducts
- Connect with tribal, land grant and acequia communities, and engaging youth in public land management

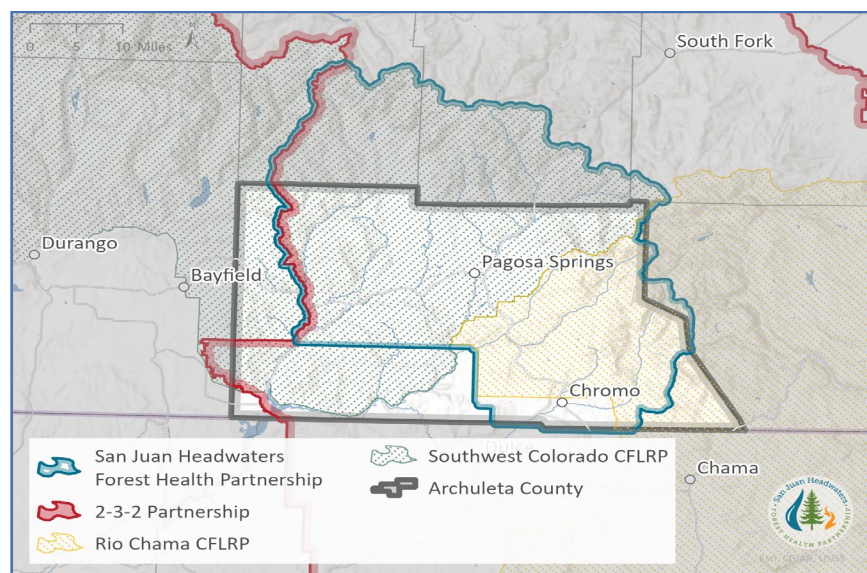


Figure 11: Boundaries of collaboratives within Archuleta County

6 Regional Volunteer Efforts in Wildland Fire Prevention/Education

Efforts across the five-county region of southwest Colorado in presenting wildland fire prevention information and developing resources for homeowners on defensible space have been a cooperative venture led by the Wildfire Adapted Partnership. Since its inception in 2003, the organization has produced videos and DVDs, newspaper articles and brochures, and has presented public programs at meetings and on local and regional radio stations. Archuleta County property owners have greatly benefited in the years WAP has been active.

6.1 Wildfire Adapted Partnership's Neighborhood Ambassador Program

In December 2004, Wildfire Adapted Partnership (formerly FireWise of Southwest Colorado) initiated a pilot program to establish wildland fire prevention “ambassadors” from within individual neighborhoods and subdivisions. Built on research principles from a Fort Lewis College project, results showed that one of the most trusted sources of information about wildland fire prevention is neighbors and friends — everyday people who are trusted and known. The Neighborhood Ambassador Program recruits, trains, and utilizes volunteers who serve as Ambassadors. FireWise was reorganized in 2018 and became the Wildfire Adapted Partnership. The Neighborhood Ambassador program has gained national recognition and become a model program for other communities across the country.

Duties of the volunteer ambassadors include:

- Plan educational campaigns or events particularly during the annual wildland fire HOA/POA or other neighborhood organizations.
- Provide a map of subdivision showing locations of structures, propane tanks, power lines, water sources, roads, gas lines, bridges (and weight limits), hazardous materials, archaeological or cultural resources, and areas of heavy fuel loads.

6.2 Wildfire Community Preparedness Day

As a result of the partnerships built regionally over the years, in 2003 a strong region wide education program was launched called *What Are You Waiting For? May Wildland Fire Prevention and Education Month*. Over 20 partners, including representatives from Archuleta County, have joined together to produce a month of public events, forums, newspaper inserts (including the weekly Pagosa Sun and the daily Durango Herald), tours to demonstration projects, video releases, and distribution of free educational materials, including DVDs and VHS. More recently, the National Fire Prevention Association Firewise USA program has promoted the first Saturday in May as Wildfire Community Preparedness Day. Archuleta County groups have supported this event and sponsored events and community work days.

7 Priority Areas

7.1 Potential Operational Delineations (POD)s

In 2020, the Rocky Mountain Research Station [Wildfire Risk Management Science \(WRMS\) Team](#) developed PODs to pre-plan for fire using a risk management approach, and to give land managers a formal process for developing landscape-scale wildfire response options before fires start. PODs are spatial units defined by relative risk to landscape values, probability of successful fire containment (given successful past suppressions) and the suppression difficulty index (the level of effort required for suppression). Often PODs are defined by potential control features, such as roads and ridge tops, within which relevant information on forest conditions, ecology, and fire potential can be summarized. PODs combine local fire knowledge with advanced spatial analytics to help managers develop a common understanding of risks, management opportunities, and desired outcomes to determine fire management objectives. (source=USFS)

7.2 Broad Landscape Opportunity Boundaries (BLOB)s

As a part of engagement in the Southwest Colorado Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (SW CO CFLRP, see 6.5) , San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership (SJHFHP, see 6.2) created priority areas called Broad Landscape Opportunity Boundaries (BLOB)s. These priority areas, which capture values ranging from water resources and infrastructure to wildlife to fire mitigation work, were shared with the San Juan National Forest to create alignment with projects and local values.

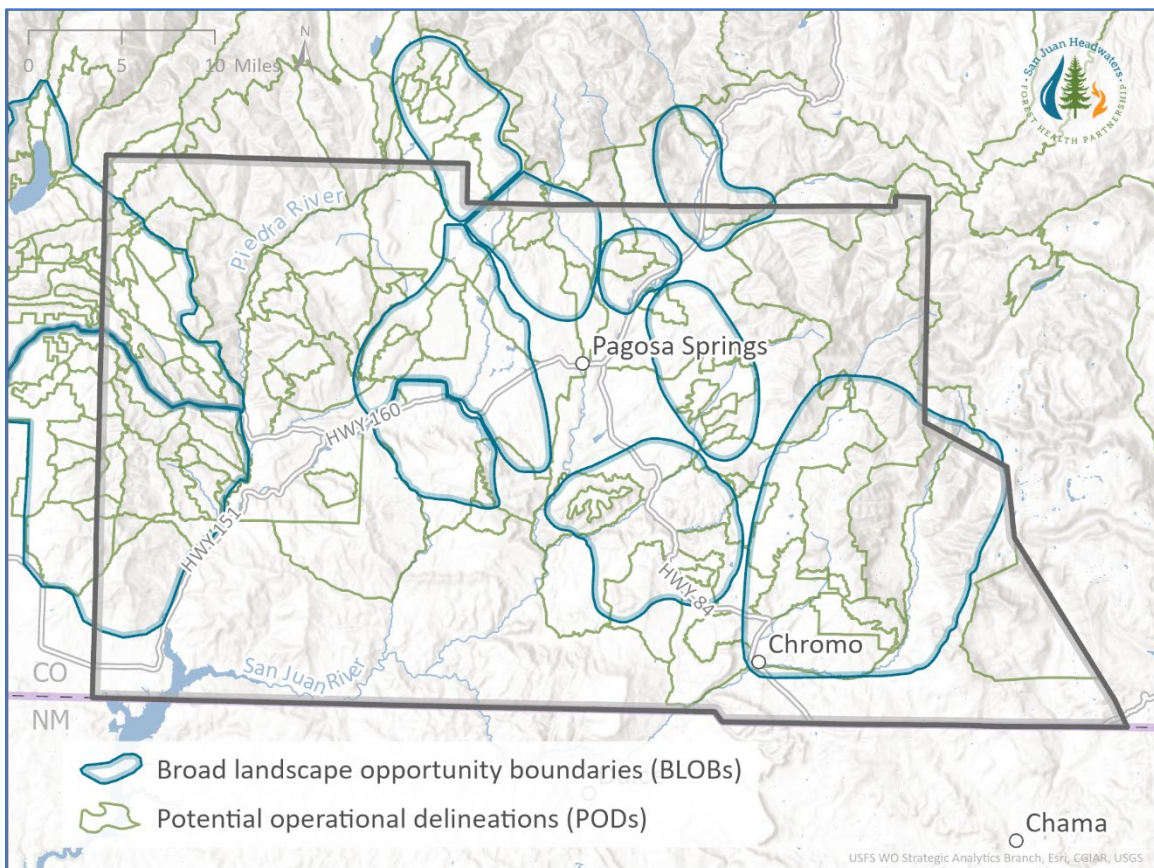


Figure 12: Map of BLOBs and PODs as defined by SJHFHP

SJHFHP Priority Landscape Areas
Jackson Mountain
Plumtaw/Fourmile
Aspen Springs
Two Forks
Turkey Springs
Echo/Mill/Lefthand
Blanco Basin/Price Lakes
Eight Mile/Kenney Flats

Figure 13: Priority Landscape Areas in Archuleta County 2025

Note: The priority landscapes shown below and the POD boundaries are all first priority work areas. BLOB details and treatments are listed in the [Priority Fact Sheet](#).

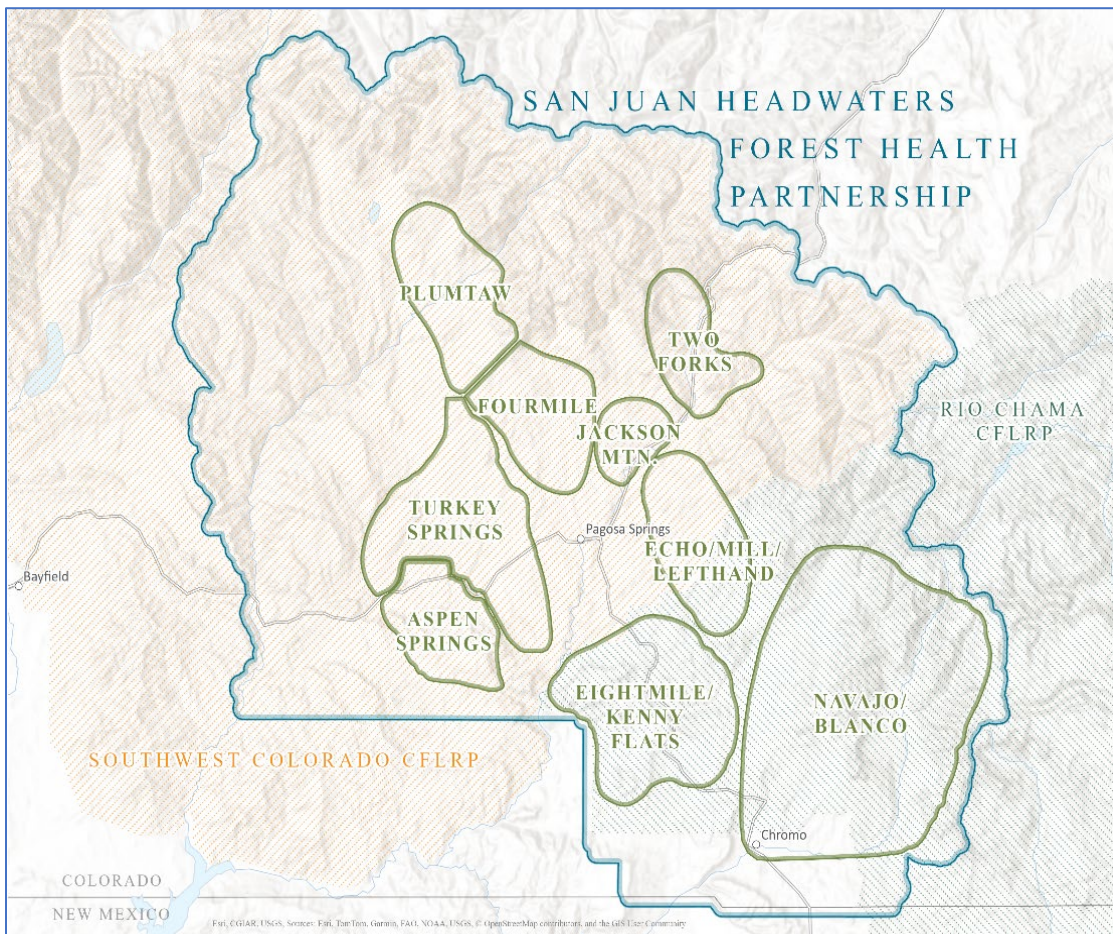


Figure 14: Priority BLOBs in Archuleta County

Within the Turkey Springs BLOB, Martinez Canyon is a serious threat. Most of the canyon is privately owned. The canyon is overloaded with fuel and could easily become a conduit to bring wildfire into and through Pagosa Lakes Property Owners Association. A fire in the canyon would immediately threaten about 2000 homes. Figure 15 highlights the canyon. Roads to the East are populated areas of the Pagosa Lakes subdivision.

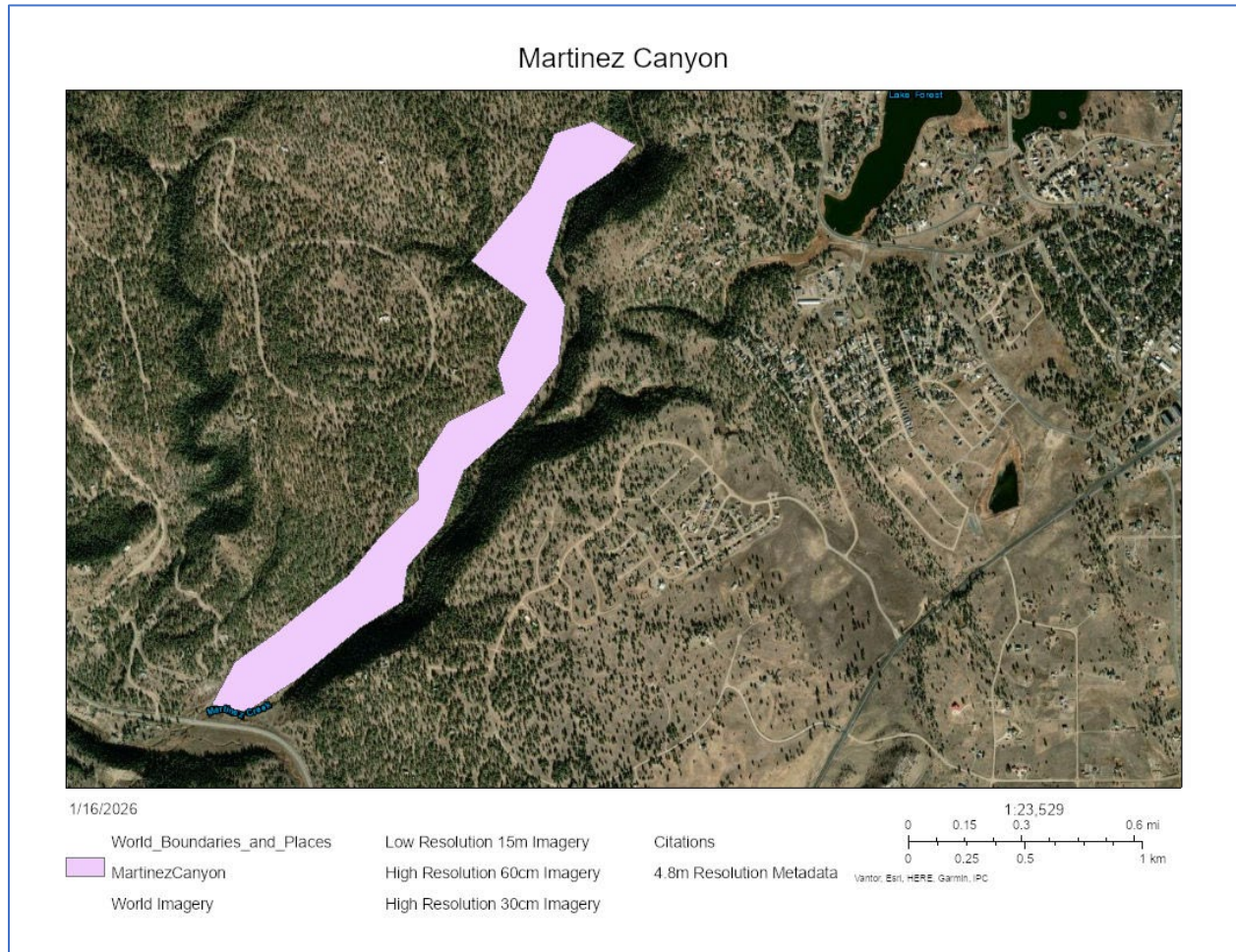


Figure 15: Martinez Canyon

7.3 Wildfire Adapted Partnership Communities: WUI Priorities

Wildfire Adapted Partnership has a host of Neighborhood Ambassador Communities in Archuleta County (see Figure 16). These Ambassadors have local knowledge, and are able to streamline mitigation education and efforts within their communities. Several of these communities overlap with PODs and BLOBs, creating clear priority areas for mitigation and restoration work. San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership Identified these priority areas based on land ownership, PODs, and BLOBs. Colorado State Forest Service mapping shows most of the county to be at high to moderate risk of both burn probability and fire intensity (see figure 2). WUI areas (see figure 8) are often either inside, or surrounded by, highly dense overgrown forest types. All areas of development in Archuleta County are considered within the WUI. Therefore, all WUI areas are priorities for private land mitigation. WAP Ambassador Priority areas include: Alpine Lakes POA, Aspenwood Condo HOA, Blue Mountain Ranches, CO Timber Ridge Ranch, Echo Canyon Ranch, Elk Park Meadows, Loma Linda, Lower Blanco, Navajo River Ranch, Oak Hills, Piedra Estates, Pagosa Lakes POA, Powderhorn, San Juan River Village, The Knolls, and Upper Piedra.

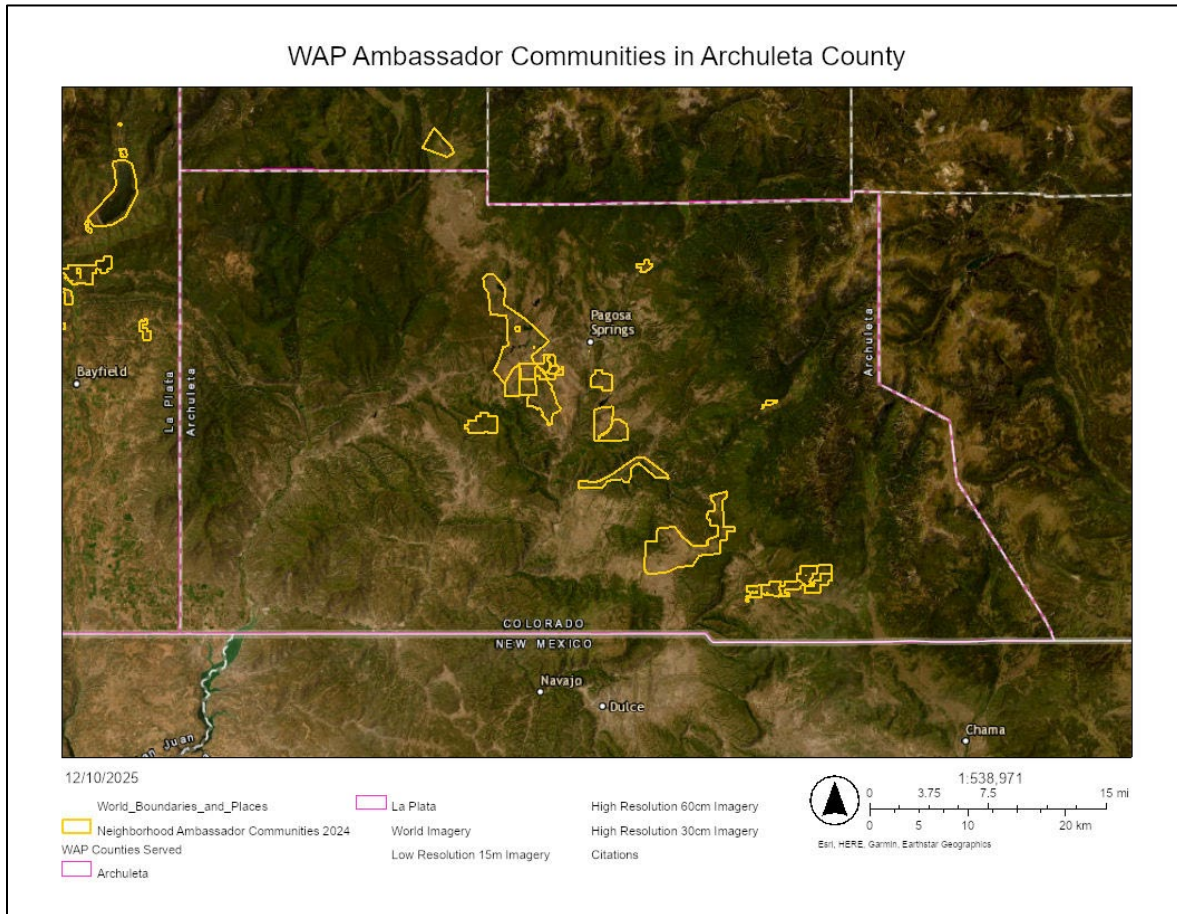


Figure 16: Wildfire Adapted Partnership Ambassador Communities in AC 2025

8 Prioritized Goals, Strategies, and Partner Responsibilities

Wildfires have occurred in Archuleta County for millennia, creating a fire-adapted ecosystem. We will never be able to stop wildfire ignitions. We are not capable of extinguishing every wildfire. History has shown that we may not want to stop all fires. Wildfire has been Mother Nature’s way of cleaning the forest, keeping it healthy and less prone to catastrophic wildfire. If we choose to live in wildfire prone areas, it is our responsibility to learn how to minimize our risks and live with the inevitability of wildfire. We need to become a Fire Adapted Community. Below are Goals and Strategies to help achieve this.

Goal #1: Create a Fire Adapted Community in order to reduce risk of destructive wildland fire in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI).

Strategy #1) Increase outreach and promotion of the Citizen’s Alert system. Sign up at <https://local.nixle.com/register/> This is the most effective method currently available to communicate dangers and evacuation information in real time.

- Reach out to HOA’s
- Add info on all WAP site assessment printouts.
- Install tab on front page of County and PFPD websites.
- Add links to partner websites

Partners responsible:

- All

Strategy #2) Build the capacity of the Wildfire Adapted Partnership’s education and outreach programs

- Increase participation in the Neighborhood Ambassador Program through recruitment, training and utilization.
- Secure consistent funding (local sources).

Partners responsible:

- Wildfire Adapted Partnership
- Chama Peak Land Alliance
- Archuleta County
- Town of Pagosa Springs
- Upper Pine Fire Protection District
- Local Homeowners Associations
- Pagosa Fire Protection District
- Los Pinos Fire Protection District

Strategy #3) Coordinate fire mitigation projects including mechanical fuels treatments, prescribed fire and timber harvests with partner organizations.

- Develop a plan and secure funding for mitigation of Martinez Canyon. This area of multiple ownership is a major conduit for wildfire and can easily spread fire to

the most densely populated areas in the County. The Canyon is within the Turkey Springs priority BLOB. **Treatment Type: Predominantly heli-logging**

1. Coordinate with USFS, Pagosa Lakes POA and private landowners.
2. Apply for FEMA funding.
3. Apply for grant funding from other sources.

Partner responsible:

- Archuleta County Sheriff's Office

- Prioritize treatments along USFS Potential Operational Delineation (PODS) boundaries shown on page 22. Within Archuleta County, the San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership is an umbrella organization that coordinates treatment planning and implementation across the multiple partner organizations including the Forest Service, Wildfire Adapted Partnership, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Colorado State Forest Service, Chama Peak Land Alliance and other partner organizations. Planning and implementation of fire and fuels management projects is a continually evolving process dependent on available resources and funding. **Treatment Type: Varied according to terrain; predominantly thinning (harvesting) and mastication.**

Partners responsible:

- San Juan National Forest
 - San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership
 - Wildfire Adapted Partnership
 - Natural Resource Conservation Service
 - Colorado State Forest Service
 - Chama Peak Land Alliance
 - Prescribed Fire Learning Exchange (TRES)
 - San Juan Conservation District
- Prioritize treatments within the Broad Landscape Opportunity Boundaries (BLOBs) shown on page 23. These areas are all high priority treatment areas that are a mix of multiple owners, both private and Federal. They are high priority because of potential impacts to critical watersheds and to areas of Wildland Urban Interface. Effective treatments will involve multiple agencies and partners. **Treatment Type: Thinning, mastication and defensible space creation around structures.**

Partners responsible:

- San Juan National Forest
- San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership
- Wildfire Adapted Partnership
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Colorado State Forest Service
- Chama Peak Land Alliance
- Prescribed Fire Learning Exchange (TRES)
- San Juan Conservation District

Strategy #4) Continue to facilitate and encourage private property mitigation through WAP programs which are predominantly hand thinning and chipping, mastication where practical.

- Site assessments
- Mitigation plans
- Cost Share projects
- Chipper Rental Rebates
- HOA programs (PLPOA slash chipping)

Partners responsible:

- Wildfire Adapted Partnership
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Pagosa Fire Protection District
- Chama Peak Land Alliance

Strategy #5) Assist Property Owners Associations in developing community assessments in at-risk subdivisions through partnering with San Juan National Forest, Colorado State Forest, Wildfire Adapted Partnership and San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership. These plans can be part of a CWPP or a Community Assessment.

- Promote participation in the Firewise/USA community recognition status program. A Community Assessment, Firewise committee and mitigation work are some of the requirements for recognition. This recognition is often used in conjunction with or in lieu of a CWPP.

Partners responsible:

- Colorado State Forest Service
- Wildfire Adapted Partnership
- Pagosa Ranger District (dependent on location of community)
- Pagosa Fire Protection District (dependent on location of community)
- Los Pinos Fire Protection District (dependent on location of community)
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (dependent on location of community)

Strategy #6) Support private contractors who can carry out fuels mitigation projects on homeowners' properties.

- Promote educational courses and workshops for mitigation contractors.
- Circulate lists of contractors.

Partners responsible:

- Colorado State Forest Service
- Wildfire Adapted Partnership

- Pueblo Community College
- Northern New Mexico Community College (El Rito campus)

Strategy #7) Utilize the Colorado Forest Wildfire Risk Viewer and other maps to display the identified threat areas to as broad a segment of residents and land owners as possible, including community groups and Property Owners Associations.

- Share mapping information and provide working copies to fire departments, county departments, state and federal agencies involved in reducing wildland fire risk especially in the WUI.
- Continue adding layers to the SJHFHP & Forest Atlas maps database to assist in emergency operations management and overall planning involving future development and infrastructure. Also add layering to show accomplished wildland fire mitigation treatments and methods used.

Partners responsible:

- San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership
- Pagosa Fire Protection District Staff
- San Juan National Forest Staff
- Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) Staff
- Los Pinos Fire Protection District Staff
- Archuleta County Sheriff's Office
- Archuleta County Commissioners
- Archuleta County GIS Mapping Office
- Wildfire Adapted Partnership

Strategy #8) Encourage the development of private, small diameter wood products processing businesses including biomass technologies. Also, encourage the extraction of saleable material from mitigation projects such as pulp, fence posts, fuel wood, mulch products, compost material, and wood for furniture and other ornamental purposes.

Partners responsible:

- All partners
- Colorado State Forest Service
- USFS, State and Private Forestry
- National Forest Foundation (including Wood for Life)
- 2-3-2 Biomass Committee
- Private and Commercial Landowners
- Good Wood Program (New Mexico)
- Wood Innovations Grant

Goal #2: Increase the number of fuel reduction projects on the San Juan National Forest, especially along PODS boundaries, near WUI and other priority areas

Strategy #1) Collaborate with San Juan National Forest in identifying wildland fire mitigation projects on federal lands identified in priority areas on the San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership maps. The maps show polygons (BLOBS) where work is needed and is consistent with land management direction and current 5-year action plans. Prioritize the projects after appropriate review processes are completed. These projects will be carried out by the San Juan National Forest in partnership with local communities, fire protection districts, CSFS, ACSO, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, private landowners or commercial landowners.

Treatment Type: Various methods based on terrain, predominantly tree thinning and mastication.

Partners responsible:

- San Juan National Forest
- San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership
- 2-3-2 Partnership
- Forest Stewards Guild
- Wildfire Adapted Partnership

Strategy #2) Continue to build, create and strengthen partnerships among federal, state and local governments and agencies, fire protection districts, private sector entities, non-profits, Property Owners Associations and landowners.

- Continue with collaboratives such as San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership and 2-3-2 Partnership

Partners responsible:

- All partners

Goal #3: Work with ranches and rural landowners to promote healthy watersheds, forest and range ecosystems along with wildland fire mitigation.

Strategy #1) Support efforts by private landowners and adjacent federal land managers to implement stewardship projects that are beneficial to both parties and the ecosystem as a whole. These projects may include timber sales, mechanical fuels reduction, watershed restoration and protection, and prescribed burning. Utilize current federal legislation that fosters such partnerships such as the Wyden Amendment and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act. Follow the US Forest Service policy of Shared Stewardship projects that involve multiple stakeholders.

Partners responsible:

- Colorado State Forest Service
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Chama Peak Land Alliance
- San Juan Conservation District
- All partners

Strategy #2) Support the professional use of prescribed fire and managed fire use as an effective and appropriate resource management tool.

- CRS 24-33.5-1217.5 details prescribed burn requirements.

Written burn plans are not required for agricultural burns but a burn permit is required under Archuleta County Amended and Restated Ordinance NO 18-2017 for the Regulations of open burning in the unincorporated areas of Archuleta County, which shall apply throughout unincorporated areas of Archuleta County, including public, private, and state lands.

Partners responsible:

- All partners

Goal #4: Reduce Ignitability of Structures

Most of these strategies duplicate or overlap with those outlined under Goal #1

Strategy #1) Increase support and facilitate wildfire risk site assessments for homeowners in Archuleta County

- Help homeowners identify their WUI risk and assist in programs for cost-share and mitigation completion
- Spread information about the [Colorado HIZ Guide](#)

Partners responsible:

- Wildfire Adapted Partnership
- PFPD

Strategy #2) Support efforts to transition to the new Colorado Wildfire Resiliency Code which will set standards for building construction in wildfire risk areas.

The following resources may be of use:

- [Colorado Wildfire Resiliency Code](#)
- [Firewise Construction Design and Materials](#)
- [Creating Wildfire-Defensible Zones](#)
- [Ignition-Resistant Landscape Plants](#)

Partners responsible:

- All partners

Strategy #3) Support and advertise the existence of private contractors who can carry out Firewise prevention projects on homeowners’ properties.

Partners responsible:

- CSFS
- Wildfire Adapted Partnership
- NRCS
- All Partners

Strategy #4) Develop a program to educate landscapers about wildfire resistant landscaping.

- Promote the new Colorado Wildfire Resiliency Code to landscapers.

[Ignition-Resistant Landscape Plants](#)

Partners responsible:

- Archuleta County Building Department
- Town of Pagosa Springs
- Fire protection districts
- Colorado State Forest Service
- Wildfire Adapted Partnership

Goal #5: Increase Public Involvement in Wildland Fire Awareness

Strategy #1) Increase the collaboration with partners to provide timely information on wildland fire awareness and community responsibility. Fire prevention messages should be directed not only to permanent residents but also seasonal residents and tourists. This job cannot be done by the public agencies alone because of the general misconception that wildland fire awareness doesn’t apply to private lands. Specifically, increase working relationships with the Wildfire Adapted Partnership, Fire Chiefs Associations, San Juan National Forest, Information Specialists, CSFS, SJMA, Chama Peak Land Alliance, San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership, San Juan Water Conservation District, and other organizations. Continue to recruit for Wildfire Adapted Ambassadors from diverse areas and neighborhoods throughout the county. Continue involvement with the Wildfire Community Preparedness Day. Use diverse spokespersons with the media outlets to keep messages from becoming “canned”.

Proposed Project Types:

- Public Awareness Campaign
- Subdivision Community Assessments
- Firewise USA Recognition Status
- Pre-Evac and Evac, education and practice
- Ready Set Go
- Film Screenings

Partners responsible:

- All partners

Strategy #2) Continue ongoing demonstration projects and add new ones in different areas to give property owners a visual picture of treatments. The Pagosa Ranger District, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and private contractors have had positive results with demonstration project areas. This effort is very productive and should increase. The other side of this “visual picture” is looking at areas near structures that are at very high risk. WAP and the Pagosa Fire Protection District will continue to promote homeowners participating in tours of these areas. Increasing these activities will be a major catalyst to success.

Proposed Project Types:

- Conduct tours of mitigated properties
- Establish partnerships between fire districts and developers
- Signage on mitigated properties

Partners responsible:

- All partners

Strategy#3) Increase public awareness of the Burn Permit rules within Archuleta County.

- Greater visibility on County website
- Newspaper articles
- Radio spots
- Social media

Partners Responsible:

- Sheriff’s Office
- WAP
- PFPD
- Los Pinos FPD
- Upper Pine FPD

Strategy #4) Improve community evacuation preparedness and planning efforts.

Individual evacuation plans for an entire county are not feasible due to the unpredictability of specific situations.

- As stated in Goal #1, prioritize residents and others to sign up for the Citizen’s Alert system
 - Increased advertising, especially during the summer tourist months
 - Dedicated tab on the County web page
 - Signage at the Visitor’s Center and resort accommodations

- Look into ways to improve traffic flow during evacuations (Responders could not get to the scene during the Oak Fire due to traffic jams.)
- ***commitment to evaluation, and
- Improve communications with responders using 800 radio systems.

Partners Responsible:

- Sheriff's Office
- PFPD
- Los Pinos FPD
- Upper Pine FPD

Plan Evaluation

Various methods will be used to measure of success of this CWPP. These include:

- Record the number of local Community Assessments that are tiered to this document and the number of Firewise/USA communities.
- Record the number of acres of fuels mitigation treatments on both private and public lands.
- Record the number of homes protected by Defensible Space.
- Document examples of fuels mitigation treatments that helped to stop or limit the destructiveness of a wildfire.
- Record the number of homes built to the new Colorado building codes (Assessor's Office).
- Growth of the WAP ambassador program.
- **Annual reporting of accomplishments to the San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership for compilation and mapping.**

Success of this CWPP will also be realized through sustained, careful, and effective partnership building among all affected stakeholders. All stakeholders have made the commitment to evaluation every 5 years, which will be crucial for up-to-date information for community members.

Appendixes

- [Archuleta County CWPP 2019](#)
- **Defensible Space and Forestry Treatments in Archuleta County Since 2020 CWPP Update**

Wildfire Adapted Partnership 2021-2025 Treatments

Year	Program	Number	Acres Treated
2021	Site Assessments with Mitigation Plan	56	---
	Defensible Space Mitigation Cost Share	22	30
	Chipper Rental Rebate	17	41
2022	Site Assessments with Mitigation Plan	102	92
2023	Site Assessments with Mitigation Plan	72	---
	Defensible Space Mitigation Cost Share	47	180
	Chipper Rental Rebate	11	25
2024	Site Assessments with Mitigation Plan	90	---
	Defensible Space Mitigation Cost Share	52	270
	Chipper Rental Rebate	23	94
2025	Site Assessments with Mitigation Plan	101	---
	Defensible Space Mitigation Cost Share	63	319
	Chipper Rental Rebate	8	42
Totals		662	1,093

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) 2021-2025 Forestry Treatments

Years	Acres
2021-2025	1,526

Southern Ute Indian Tribe 2021-2025 Forestry Treatments

Years	Acres
2021-2025	1,339

San Juan National Forest, Pagosa Ranger District 2021-2025 Forestry Treatments

Years	Treatment Type	Acres
2021-2025	Timber Sales	6,355
2021-2025	Fuels Treatments	30,220

Chama Peak Land Alliance 2021-2025 Forestry Treatments

Years	Acres
2021-2025	1,921

- **Authorization:**

Under Colorado law, the county Sheriff has been given the authority to act as fire warden for the county as provided by the following statutes:

- o C.R.S. v.9 30-10-512 Sheriff to act as fire warden.
- o C.R.S. v.9 30-10-513 Sheriff in charge of forest or prairie fire.
- o C.R.S. v.9 30-10-513.5 Authority of Sheriff relating to fire within unincorporated areas of county.

- **Archuleta County's Fire Protection Infrastructure:**

Archuleta County has three protection districts. The Pagosa Fire Protection District (PFPD) covers an area of 320 square miles of the county with funds collected from a special tax district. It responds to structure fires within its boundaries, but works on wildland fires outside of its jurisdiction only if asked and able to.

Los Pinos Fire Protection District is headquartered in Ignacio, Colorado. The district includes the southern portion of the County in the area near Arboles. There is a station in Arboles.

Upper Pine Fire Protection District covers a small portion of the County along the border of La Plata County, east of Bayfield, Colorado.

The remaining portion of the county has no dedicated structural fire protection. All agencies respond to fire calls county-wide, as per the Multi-Year Operating Plan, providing free services for the first 24 hours of a fire. If it is not suppressed by then a fee is charged for firefighter time and equipment. Many times, the US Forest Service, BIA and BLM have responded to wildfires on private lands as a part of their interagency activities.