



SB25-007

SHORT TITLE: Increase Prescribed Burns

LONG TITLE: Concerning support to increase prescribed burns.

SPONSORS: Senators Cutter and Marchman/Reps. Velasco and Weinberg

COMMITTEES: Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources

PURPOSE OF THE BILL: To incentivize increased use of prescribed burning as wildfire mitigation

PROPONENTS OF THE BILL: Wildfire Matters Interim Committee

POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS: Colorado Forest Service, local fire districts, Dept. of Public Safety, wildfire risk communities, water providers

BACKGROUND: The Wildfire Matters Interim Committee was formed in 2013 following a deadly fire when a prescribed burn reignited in rural Jefferson County. The existence of a fund to compensate victims suffering loss from a prescribed burn may alleviate reluctance to use this tool for fire mitigation.

Is this bill necessary this year? There is no deadline

How does the bill change current law? It establishes a compensation fund and sets procedures for limiting claims.

Does the bill affect the prior appropriations system? No

How is the bill implemented: Subject to annual appropriation, the Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) in the Department of Public Safety (CDPS) will use the fund to pay damage claims resulting from prescribed fire projects that meet certain requirements, including registering plans with the CDPS. When registering projects, the CDPS will charge the prescribed fire manager a plan registration fee based on the complexity of the plan, but at least \$100. No one claim can be awarded more than 10 percent of the fund balance at the time the claim is filed. Additionally, CDPS may contract with a third-party for administration and investigation of claims.

Practical considerations: The cost of the program may jeopardize its enactment this year. The use of the prescribed fire program is difficult to anticipate as is the likelihood of any claims arising from incidental loss.

Fiscal Impact: One million dollars from the General Fund. Estimated costs from the fiscal note includes CDPS requires 1.2 FTE to oversee the newly created Prescribed Fire Claims Cash Fund, develop the program criteria, register any prescribed fire projects desiring coverage, and supervise any necessary claim investigation contracts. In addition to the standard operating costs, specific costs for firefighter FTE are shown above and include a vehicle lease, travel costs, and the one-time purchase of equipment.