

I had the pleasure of serving on the Colorado Wildfire Resiliency Code Board. My sponsor for the position was the Colorado Department of Public Safety. The two year board position provided insight and questions into state and local response to structure and landscape hardening. At the end of the two year appointment, we adopted through the state rule making a minimum code for new residences and remodels, to protect the health and safety of Coloradans, to affordably harden structure exteriors and provide certainty to the built environment for builders.

### **Western Slope and statewide efforts to protect our communities.**

We have made significant investments in bolstering our capacity to protect our resort economy, communities, and natural landscapes from the escalating threat of wildfires.

### **Mutual aid agreements and valley wide coverage**

Our fire protection districts have made significant investments to strengthen regional safety. This includes full-time fire protection staffing in both cities and rural areas, the development of state-of-the-art wildfire training facilities, housing for our first responders (EMS and fire, new housing development in Aspen and West Sopris and El Jebel), addition of new stations to support rural growth and the construction of a regional emergency dispatch center.

### **Artificial Intelligence**

In the valley, from Redstone to Aspen we have strengthened early wildfire protection through the use of Artificial Intelligence cameras that detect wildfires in real time. Recent cameras were added in Thomasville for Frying Pan AI wildfire detection support.

### **Air Support**

In 2025 we added Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) capabilities year round at Aspen Airport. The Sardy Field team in Aspen, complements West Slope air tanker capabilities already in Grand Junction and Rifle and reduces the burden on East Slope firefighting capabilities. This is an IGA just signed by Pitkin County (ASE), Aspen Fire Protection District (AFPD) and the City of Aspen (for water).

### **Additional Western Sloper Air Support- Pending and Interested**

The Pitkin County Board of County Commissioners, supports the establishment of a DFPC Firehawk on the Western Slope. (Montrose or similar geographic location). Pitkin County is committed to collaborating with the Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC), counties and municipalities and neighboring fire protection districts in this region to enhance wildfire response capabilities regionally. Our community would gladly welcome the FireHawk with hanger space and local/regional training facilities and house the ground firefighters. The SEAT IGA and the mutual aid agreement between Roaring Fork Rural Fire District and the Aspen Fire Protection District demonstrate our longstanding commitment to collaboration and sharing of resources. The helicopter and ground team opportunity complements the vital investments we have made to protect our communities. (Decision pending).

### **Code: Building and Site and Area Design**

Lastly, representatives from the Western Slope, including Pitkin County (Commissioner) and the Aspen Fire Protection District (Fire Chief and staff) have spent the past year and half, working with DFPC and the Wildfire Resiliency Code Board on a statewide Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) code.

Our draft Colorado WUI code is stronger than California (7A) and incorporates lessons from FEMA after-action reports (post Marshall and Lahaina and California), as well as National

Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and current codes and standards (IWUIC and NFPA).

**Prescribed burns**

The White River National Forest, Roaring Fork Rural Fire Protection District, Aspen Fire Protection District, Roaring Fork Wildfire Collaborative all collaborate to make our community more resilient to wildfire. High risk areas are identified and partner agencies are successfully mitigating priority areas to protect and safeguard homes.

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