

# Colorado | Front Range Landscape Restoration Initiative | 2016

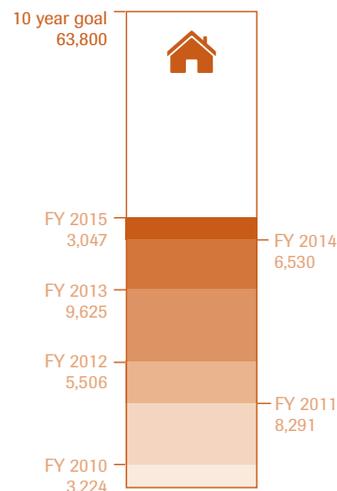


Treated project area around North Catamount Reservoir. © Paige Lewis

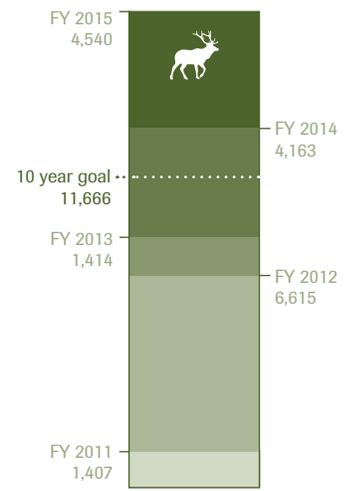
Colorado's Front Range forests are home to nearly 2 million people and furnish drinking water to more than two-thirds of the state's residents. Unfortunately, these forests are also at extremely high risk to destructive megafires. The Front Range CFLR project is building on long-standing partnerships to protect communities, watersheds and wildlife while also creating much needed local jobs.

## Partners

- Larimer County
- Boulder County
- Bureau of Land Management
- Coalition for the Upper South Platte
- Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife
- Colorado Forest Restoration Institute
- Colorado Mountain Club
- Colorado Springs Utilities
- Colorado State Forest Service
- Colorado Timber Industry Association
- Denver Water Department
- El Paso County
- Jefferson County
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Rocky Mountain Research Station
- Rocky Mountain Tree Ring Research
- Teller County
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Wilderness Society
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Geological Survey
- West Boulder Healthy Forest Initiative
- West Range Reclamation
- Woodland Park Healthy Forest Initiative



**Community Protection**  
Acres of hazardous fuels reduced



**Wildlife Habitat Enhancement**  
Acres of habitat restored



Eric Howell

From the forest to the faucet, protecting forest resources and providing a safe and reliable water supply is what drives Eric Howell's forest management program.

Eric, a third generation resident of the Pikes Peak region, has worked for Colorado Springs Utilities for the past 22 years, handling a variety of tasks that protect Colorado Springs' water supply.

Unlike most of Colorado's other Front Range cities, Colorado Springs does not have a primary river to draw from. Instead the city imports a majority of its water to the Front Range through extensive collection systems and reservoirs.

Much of this water starts as snowpack before melting and rifling down streams that wind their way through forested landscapes. These critical forests are primarily owned and managed by the USDA Forest Service, but the Utility also relies on local water flow from 16,000 forested acres on Pikes Peak, owned and managed by Colorado Springs Utilities.

All of this complexity keeps Howell's job interesting, because he is responsible for making sure the city's water remains safe and available. One of the projects that helps him achieve his goal is the Front Range Landscape Restoration Initiative, under the federal Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration program (CFLR).

"By restoring a more natural, healthy condition to the forests on these source water lands, we can reduce the potential for large wildfires and post-fire flooding, erosion and debris flow," explained Howell. "This, in turn, enables us to maximize the potential of these lands to store water and provide a more reliable, higher-quality water supply throughout the year. CFLR provides money for us and others to do these needed treatments."

As deputy chief of the Colorado Springs Utilities wildland fire team, reducing wildfire hazard is a task that especially resonates with Howell, particularly on the heels of the 2012 Waldo Canyon Fire that burned 346 homes in Colorado Springs and impacted water security.

"The Waldo Canyon Fire burned 3,000 acres of our Northfield watershed, and shortly following the fire we experienced a typical rain event that dropped about half an inch of rain," said Howell. "But due to the loss of vegetation and soil conditions from the fire, the ground wasn't able to hold water. The resulting run-off blew out several culverts and service roads, and exposed vital water supply pipelines that cost \$10 million to repair," says Howell.

"Investing \$1,500 per acre ahead of time in forest treatment work is much cheaper than reactively paying millions of dollars for suppression costs, infrastructure repair and watershed restoration work due to an emergency fire. CFLR funding goes a long way towards the prevention of these large expenses following a fire."



**Total acreage of landscape: 1.4 million**

### 2015 Results

- 253 jobs created or maintained at an average per year
- \$4.8 million in total labor income
- 8,108 CCF of timber sold
- 4,091 acres of forest planted and restored



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Bull elk in the Front Range @ Stephen Frick  
The Front Range CFLR created or maintained  
138 jobs in 2015. © Pam Motley