CFRI and the 2020 Fire Season

By creating and integrating actionable knowledge across forest and fire management, we helped break down social and ecological barriers to prepare people and landscapes for the 2020 fire season.

Pre-Fire Planning

Fire requires cross-boundary planning, and CFRI works with federal, state, and local organizations in Northern Colorado to support the Northern Colorado Fireshed Collaborative.

- Our landscape prioritization modeling identifies where people can work most effectively towards shared outcomes.
- CFRI collects and analyzes prescribed fire and mechanical treatment effectiveness data with and for our partners to improve outcomes on the ground.
- CFRI's collaborative frameworks leverage our monitoring data to build a shared, science-based understanding of landscape conditions.

Smoke in the Air

Colorado's 2020 fire season had huge social and ecological impacts, and CFRI's relationships with land and fire managers meant that our science-based information and analyses were accessible for fire managers and decision makers to use during fires. We collaborated with teams at the Rocky Mountain Research Station to help fire managers pre-plan fire response activities using Potential Operational Delineations. Products from this collaborative pre-planning, including maps showing suppression difficulty index, and potential control lines, informed fire response that incorporated multiple values.

The Calwood Fire started on October 17 2020, and burned over 10,000 acres in Boulder County. The fire moved quickly and destroyed at least 20 homes.
Photo Credit: William D. Bowman

Post-Fire Recovery

CFRI's expertise is used in post-fire recovery planning:

- CFRI modeling helped prioritize watershed protection by identifying locations and methods for containing post-fire erosion hotspots across the Cameron Peak and East Troublesome Fires, the two largest in Colorado's recent history.
- Before the flames were out, CFRI began working with the Arapaho & Roosevelt National Forests and the Rocky Mountain Research Station to determine areas where reforestation and recovery efforts can be spatially prioritized to give the best bang for the buck with limited resources for re-planting.

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