



La Plata County
Colorado

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For more information, please contact
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Grant will fund area wildfire mitigation efforts

Durango Fire Protection District (DFPD) recently received a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). The Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation grant (WIIN) is focused on completing wildfire mitigation in the San Juan Basin and watershed for the Florida River.

Grant funding includes nearly \$500,000 for private landowners to complete wildfire mitigation and receive up to 50% reimbursement. The funding also will allow Mountain Studies Institute to install automated water monitoring systems on the Florida River.

The EPA aims to increase water monitoring programs, particularly those that work in watersheds. The CDPHE accepted a financial award from EPA, reviewed local projects, and selected award recipients.

The Colorado State Forest Service Action Plan of 2020 identified La Plata County and areas within the Florida River Wildfire Reduction Project as high risk for wildfire and drew attention to the need to protect the watershed. The Florida Watershed, beginning at Lemon Reservoir, provides agricultural water for residents throughout La Plata County and is the primary water source for subdivisions on County Road 240 and all residents and businesses in the City of Durango.

Monitoring data collected through WIIN will inform decisions on where mitigation is needed and establish a baseline for further action. Data measured will include metals, mercury, aluminum and macroinvertebrates. The established baseline data will be used following a wildfire to inform which techniques are necessary to restore water quality.

DFPD will administer the grant with Wildfire Adapted Partnership (WAP), Mountain Studies Institute (MSI), and the Wildfire and Watershed Protection Fund Coordinator (WWPF). The WWPF position was created through an intergovernmental agreement between the City of Durango, DFPD, and La Plata County to implement projects and obtain funds to complete wildfire mitigation at a landscape level and in partnership with private landowners.

In keeping with the objectives of WWPF, the WIIN grant is the first opportunity to engage the public in a free Home Wildfire Risk Assessments that can translate into completed wildfire mitigation eligible for reimbursement. Landowners will have the opportunity to select a contractor of choice. Contractors are invited to attend a meeting to learn about the grant at Durango Fire Station 1, located at 142 Sheppard Dr. in Bodo Park from 6 to 7 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 22 and Wednesday, Sept. 28

CDPHE signed an agreement with EPA to administer the funds by July 2026. For more information, visit https://www.co.laplata.co.us/departments/emergency_management/cdphe_epa_grant.php or contact Pete Stockwell, Durango Fire Wildfire Mitigation Specialist, at (970) 385-3268 or peter.stockwell@durangofire.org.



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