

SB1-102 State Forester Prescribed Fire Certification Standards



Summary

This bill requires the Colorado State Forest Service, to establish standards for training and certification of prescribed fire users. The CSFS will work with the Colorado Prescribed Fire Council, a nonprofit organization that works for appropriate and safe prescribed fire use, and may work with local fire jurisdictions. The CSFS certification standards must include the following: a certified and noncertified burner designation; requirements, processes, and procedures for certified burners to follow when conducting a prescribed burn; and recommended organizational structures for prescribed burn operations. The CSFS also must identify preexisting fees, permit requirements, liabilities, liability exemptions, and penalties for burn personnel and landowners. The use of prescribed burns will not require certification, rather, standards for training and certification are provided as a resource to help prescribed burners plan for and use fire safely. Organizations that provide training and certification, which may include the CSFS, will provide consistent instructional content and certification requirements. Prescribed fires, other than agricultural burns, are permitted by the Department of Public Health and Environment.

Talking Points

- A significant portion of Colorado is composed of fire-dependant forest communities.
- Prescribed fire can be used effectively to thin forests, reduce understory vegetation, and reduce fuel loads and the risk of damaging catastrophic fire.
- Dead wood, overcrowded unhealthy trees, and thick layers of pine needles can all contribute to catastrophic wildfires, including crown fires.
- Thinned forests can recover faster and are more resistant to attack from insects and diseases. Fire releases nitrogen and other nutrients back to the soil, which promotes growth of beneficial native plant species.
- It is expected that by accepting and following specific standards, prescribed fire applicators will be more successful at reaching their objectives and decreasing risk of fire escape.
- This legislation will increase awareness of prescribed fire as a management tool and, through the requirement of consultation with the members of the Prescribed Fire Council, lead to better understanding of the science of prescribed fire.
- Specific to the direction of SB 102, the CSFS will consult with the Colorado Prescribed Fire Council when it addresses each of the points outlined in the bill.
- The Colorado State Forest Service supports SB10-102.