

# INTRODUCTION

## ***Purpose***

The purpose of the Douglas County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (DC CWPP) is to provide a scientific, comprehensive resource for the citizens of Douglas County to assist with mitigation efforts and the development of local-level Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP). The plan will also assist the county in identifying and prioritizing wildfire hazard areas on county-owned lands for future treatment.

## ***Plan Objectives***

- Define the existing wildfire situation in Douglas County.
- Identify common obstacles communities and stakeholders in Douglas County face in reducing their wildfire hazards.
- Provide information and tools to help overcome common obstacles that communities in Douglas County face in reducing their wildfire hazards, including streamlining the local-level CWPP process.
- Provide an implementation plan that suggests future programmatic steps in overcoming common obstacles and reducing wildfire hazard around Douglas County.
- Identify county-owned parcels for treatment and parameters for prioritizing treatment.
- Identify recommendations for potential landscape scale fuel treatments

## ***How to Use This Document***

The DC CWPP is a county-wide planning effort. It serves as an umbrella document to identify fire hazard areas within the unincorporated portions of the county and methods to address those hazards. It is a birds-eye view and conceptual in nature, yet contains an appropriate level of specificity for county-owned properties at this plan scale. The Douglas County Wildfire Hazard Assessment identifies wildfire hazard potential throughout Douglas County from a landscape perspective. It is important to consider the inputs of the wildfire hazard assessment model and that the community boundaries are *soft* lines that are drawn around concentrations of address points. Outside of these concentrations of address points exist larger lots and parcels that contain contiguous fuel beds. Recommendations for large lots are included in this document to guide landowners. **It is imperative that the narrative accompanying the assessment be read thoroughly and understood by the user before any inferences are made from the hazard assessment. Appendix A provides the user with more detailed information about the assessment process. The assessment does not take into account details such as defensible space, construction materials, ingress/egress routes etc. Consequentially, inferences toward defensibility or hazard level of individual homes, lots, or parcels should never be made based solely on this assessment.**

The plan contains programmatic recommendations and provides guidance to citizens interested in creating a local-level plan. This plan is not intended to identify parcel level specifics nor does it identify individual community fuels treatment priorities. These items are to be evaluated and included in a local-level CWPP.

### ***DC CWPP Process***

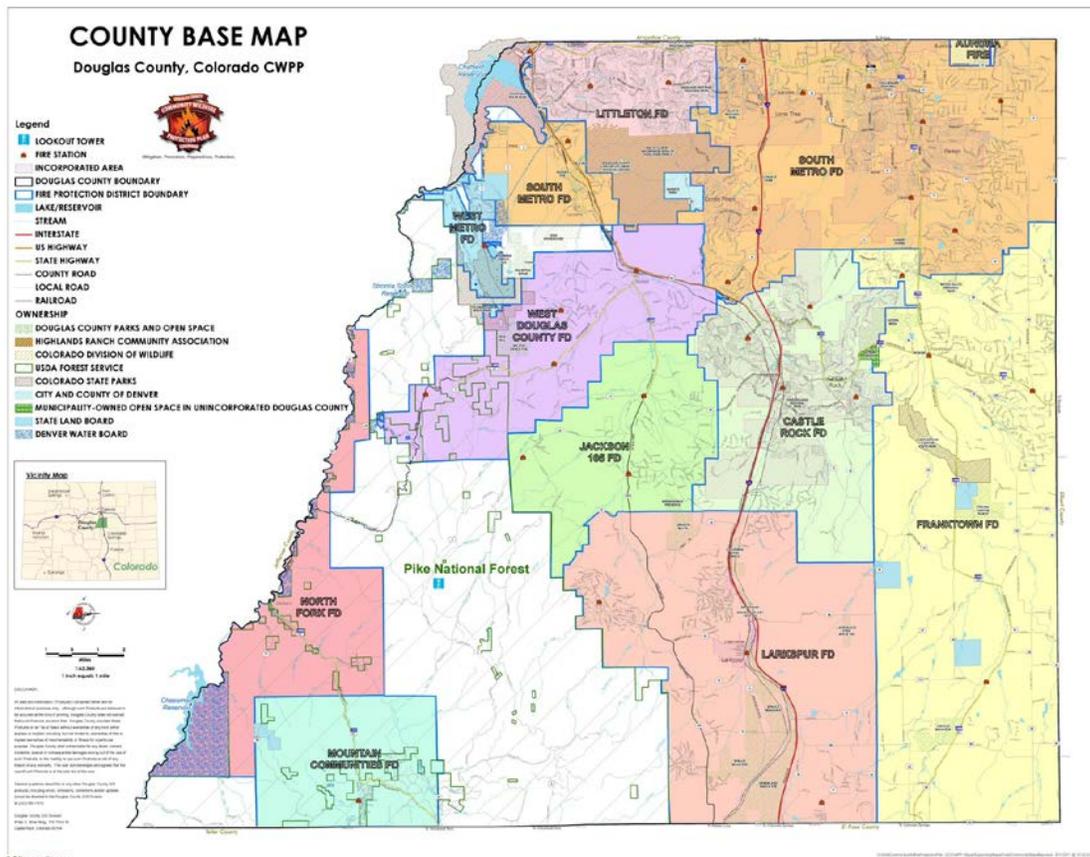
The CWPP process is based on collaboration with a diverse group of stakeholders. Minimum standards established by the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) must be met for the plan to be approved. The minimum standards were revised in 2009 and include requirements for plan participants and plan components including:

- Defining the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) boundary
- Community risk analysis
- Discussion of the communities preparedness to respond to wildfire
- Recommendations to reduce structural ignitability
- Fuels treatment priorities and methods of treatment
- An implementation plan

The document must contain a level of specificity appropriate for the plan scale. The CWPP process must demonstrate collaboration and the resulting document should be reasonable and implementable. A copy of the minimum standards may be found on the CSFS website at <http://www.csfs.colostate.edu>

In 2009, the Colorado Legislature passed SB 09-001 requiring counties to identify hazards within the unincorporated areas of the county and create a CWPP to address those hazards. The leadership at Douglas County recognized the need to complete the CWPP process and supported the Douglas County Wildfire Mitigation and Office of Emergency Management staff sharing the leadership role for this collaborative process. After much consideration the decision was made to separate the county by fire protection district because organizationally this method made the most sense and would be most relative to the citizenry of the county. The county staff created a *County Base Map* (see map below) to highlight important features that would be used throughout the CWPP process to determine community boundaries, fuel treatment priorities, etc. The base map features:

- Fire Protection District Boundaries
- Major Roads by Type
- Streams and Lakes
- Fire Station Locations
- Public Land Ownership
- Town/Incorporated Area Boundaries



**Base Map**

The CWPP process was separated into four phases describing work conducted, products produced and opportunities for public input.

## **Phase 1: Core Team, WUI Boundary, Hazard Analysis, and Public Outreach**

### **Core Team**

The DC CWPP process began with establishment of the core team and the first core team meeting was held on April 29, 2010. Core team members include additional representation from Douglas County including Open Space and Natural Resources, Engineering, Public Works Operations Division, Public Affairs, the CSFS, also representing Denver Water, representatives from the 11 fire protection districts who provide service to Douglas County residents, and the US Forest Service South Platte Ranger District (USFS SPRD). The role of the core team is to steer the CWPP process, approve draft products for publication on the website for public comment, and provide differing venues and opportunities for stakeholder input. The core team discusses comments to draft products, makes recommendations based on comments and address all

comments made to the website. All completed products are approved by the core team. The core team had four meetings in 2010 and one in 2011. All core team meeting notes can be found in Appendix B.

### **WUI Boundary/Hazard Analysis**

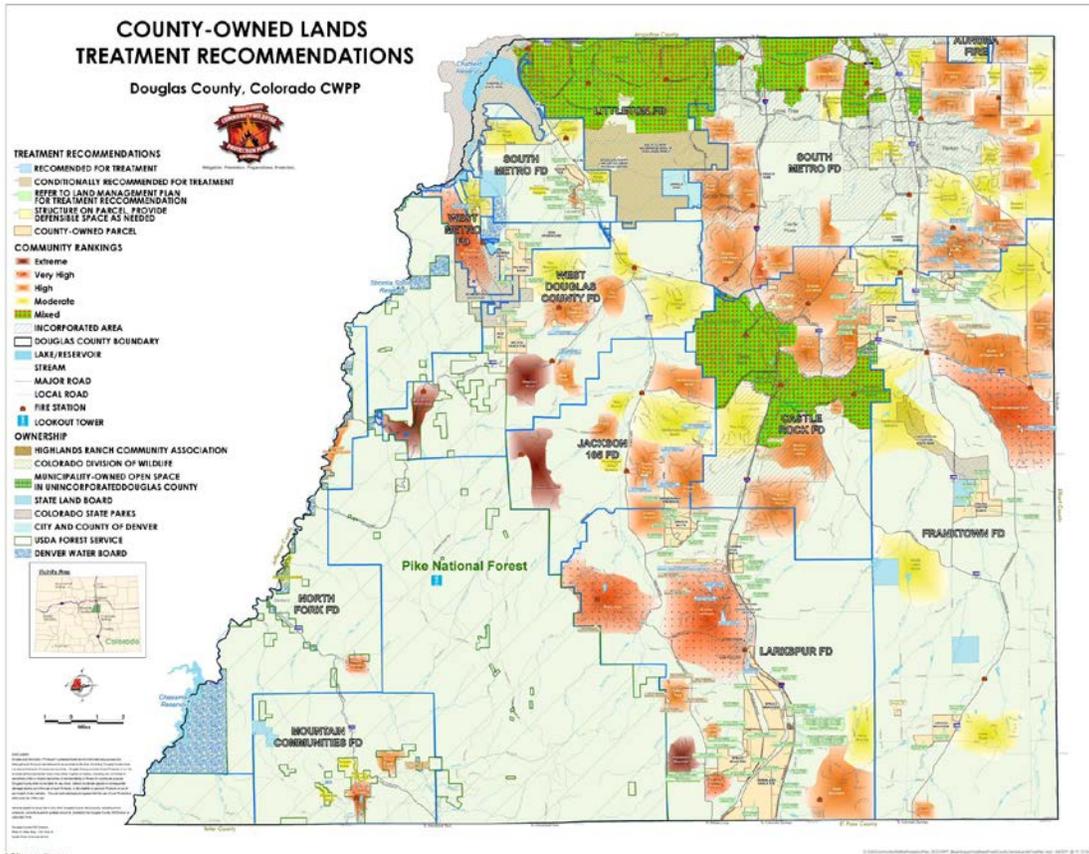
To maintain focus within the county the core team determined the WUI boundary would match the county boundary. The core team discussed and approved the hazard analysis model; a weighted overlay of hazard, values, and risks. This hazard analysis produced the *Wildfire Hazard Potential Map* for the county, which was used in to identify hazard areas within the county.

County Wildfire Mitigation and Open Space and Natural Resources staff conducted a county lands assessment that categorized parcels and identified parameters to prioritize areas and recommendations for treatment on county-owned lands (such as open space). Specific parcels and their respective treatment category are included for each fire protection district. This information can be used by communities to identify potential treatments on county-owned lands within their communities for local-level plans.

Products for Phase 1 include:

- *Wildfire Hazard Potential Map* (see map below).
- *County-Owned Lands Treatment Recommendations Map* (see map below)





**County-Owned Lands Treatment Recommendations Map**

Phase 1 also focused on raising public awareness of the CWPP process and identifying opportunities for public input and involvement. Given the scale of the plan it was important to provide as many opportunities as possible for the public to provide input. The Douglas County Public Affairs staff created an independent website to post draft maps, core team and community meeting notes, frequently asked questions, reference materials, public service announcements, and created an avenue for public comments to be submitted to the core team. Post cards were developed to publicize the website and were distributed to all fire protection districts, core team members, and at different venues around the county. A banner announcing the CWPP process and website was placed on the Douglas County home page and a public service announcement was crafted. Press releases were placed in county-wide publications including newspapers, HOA newsletters, county community newsletters, and on websites that announce county business. Fire protection districts were encouraged to provide a link on their website to the CWPP website and the CWPP website hosts links to fire department websites. More detailed information on the Douglas County CWPP Communications Plan can be found in Appendix B.

Products produced as part of Phase 1 were posted on the DC CWPP website for public review and comment and printed copies were available at local libraries around the

county. They were later presented and discussed at community meeting venues as part of Phase 3.

## Phase 2: Community Delineation/Hazard Rankings and Fuel Treatment Recommendations

### Community Delineation/Hazard Rankings

Members of the core team (Douglas County Mitigation Staff, CSFS, Douglas County Open Space, and USFS SPRD) met with each fire protection district representative and used the *Wildfire Hazard Potential Map* to identify communities and provide a hazard ranking for each community identified. The purpose of the hazard ranking is to raise awareness of the potential wildfire hazards that exist based on hazard, risk, and values of the Douglas County Wildfire Hazard Assessment. Community boundaries are not hard boundaries and incorporated larger areas of similar fuel types around concentrations of address points. The hazard ranking process identified 102 communities throughout the county and the hazard ratings are as follows:

- 4 communities rated extreme
- 8 communities rated very high
- 48 communities rated high
- 31 communities rated moderate
- 11 communities rated mixed

More information on the hazard ratings can be found in the Toolbox, General Tools section of the plan. Table 1 Community Wildfire Hazard Potential Rankings lists each community identified and their associated hazard ranking.

<b>FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT</b>	<b>COMMUNITY NAME</b>	<b>HAZARD RANKING</b>
<b>Aurora</b>	Rocking Horse	Moderate
<b>Castle Rock</b>	Greater Plum Creek	Mixed
	Founders Village/Castlewood Ranch	Mixed
	Meadows/Red Hawk	Mixed
	Metzler Ranch	Mixed
	Cobblestone	Moderate
	The Oaks	Moderate
	Bell Mountain Ranch	High
	Castle Ridge East	High
	Charter Oaks	High
	Greater Crowfoot	High
	Greater Crystal Valley	High
	Keene Ranch	High
	Woodlands and Escavera	High

<b>FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT</b>	<b>COMMUNITY NAME</b>	<b>HAZARD RANKING</b>
<b>Franktown</b>	Castlewood Canyon	Moderate
	Jones Road	Moderate
	Northeast Franktown	Moderate
	Pinery West	Moderate
	South Lake Gulch	Moderate
	El Dorado Acres	High
	Flintwood Hills	High
	North of Highway 86	High
	Russellville/Deerfield	Very High
<b>Jackson 105</b>	Allis Ranch	Moderate
	Plum Creek Valley Estates	Moderate
	Wolfensburger South	Moderate
	Greater Dawson	High
	Greater Perry Pines	High
	Keene Ranch	High
	Pine Ridge	High
	Wolfensburger North	High
	Jackson/Dakan	Extreme
<b>Larkspur</b>	Mesa Grande	Moderate
	Bald Mountain	High
	Bell Mountain Ranch	High
	Greater Dawson	High
	Greenland Acres	High
	Keene Ranch	High
	Valley Park	High
	Woodmoor Mountain	Extreme
	Greater Larkspur	Very High
	Perry Park	Very High
Spruce Mountain Estates	Very High	
<b>Littleton</b>	Highlands Ranch	Mixed
<b>Mountain Communities</b>	Freedonia Ranch	Moderate
	Highway 67 Corridor	Moderate
	Thunder Butte	Moderate
	Rainbow Falls Fishing Club	High
	Trout Creek	High
	West Creek	Very High

<b>FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT</b>	<b>COMMUNITY NAME</b>	<b>HAZARD RANKING</b>
<b>North Fork</b>	Deckers/Trumbull	Moderate
	Scraggy View/Nighthawk	High
	North Rainbow Falls	Very High
<b>South Metro</b>	Inverness/Meridian	Mixed
	Stonegate	Mixed
	Parker North	Mixed
	Chatfield	Moderate
	Cherokee Ridge Estates	Moderate
	Cherry Creek Highlands	Moderate
	Colorado Golf Club	Moderate
	Crown Point	Moderate
	Greater Delbert	Moderate
	Meridian Village	Moderate
	Plum Valley Heights	Moderate
	Ponderosa East	Moderate
	Richlawn Hills	Moderate
	Spirit Ridge	Moderate
	Summit Ridge	Moderate
	Titan Road	Moderate
	Black Forest	High
	Castle Pines North	High
	Charter Oaks	High
	Corson/Scenic Ridge	High
	Grandview Estates	High
	Greater Castle Pines Village	High
	Happy Canyon Ranches	High
	Hidden Village	High
	Homestead Hills	High
	Johnson Road	High
	Lemon Gulch	High
	Livengood Hills Estates	High
	Louviers	High
	McArthur Ranch	High
Parker East	High	
Parker View Estates	High	
Ponderosa Hills	High	
Surrey Ridge	High	
The Pinery	High	
Tomahawk	High	
Windy Hills	High	
Happy Canyon	Very High	

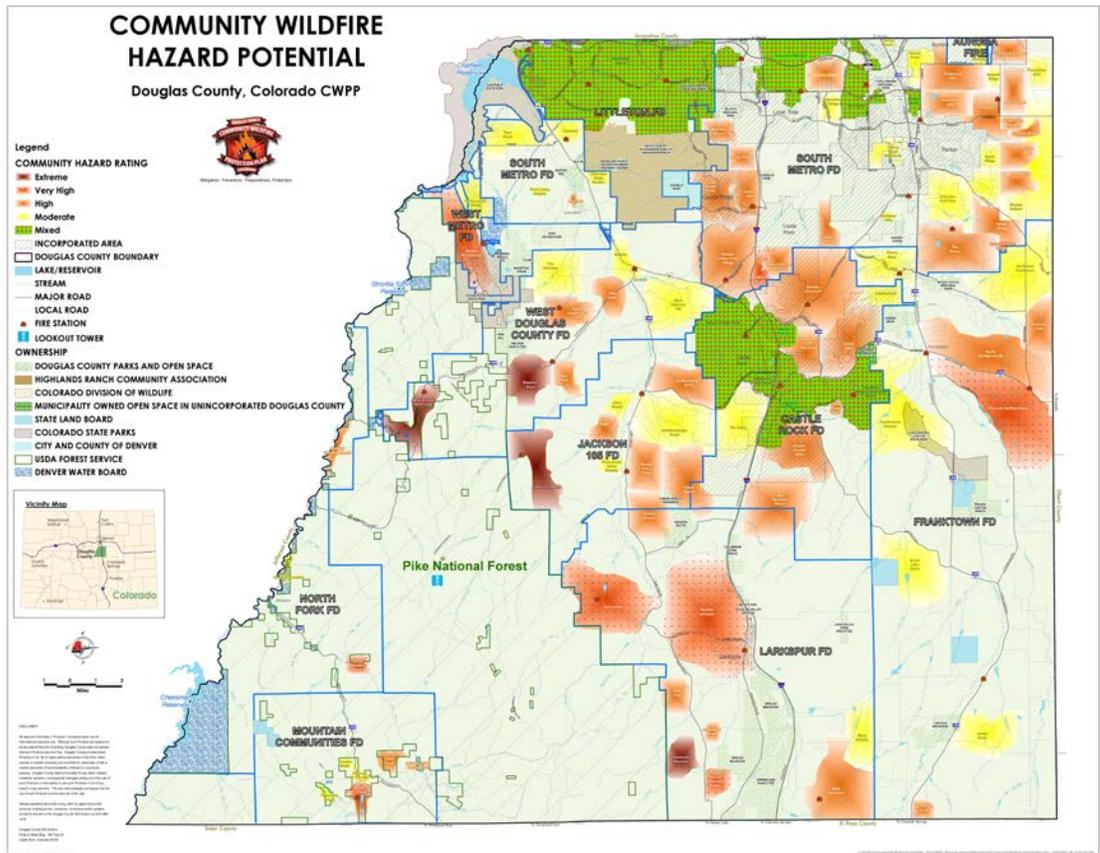
<b>FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT</b>	<b>COMMUNITY NAME</b>	<b>HAZARD RANKING</b>
<b>West Douglas County</b>	East Highway 105	Moderate
	Sedalia	Moderate
	The Ranches	Moderate
	Bee Rock	High
	Hier Valley	High
	Indian Creek/Jarre Creek	High
	Elephant Rock	Extreme
	Sprucewood/Moonridge	Extreme
<b>West Metro</b>	Roxborough Village	Moderate
	Greater Roxborough	Very High

**Table 1: Community Wildfire Hazard Potential Hazard Rankings**

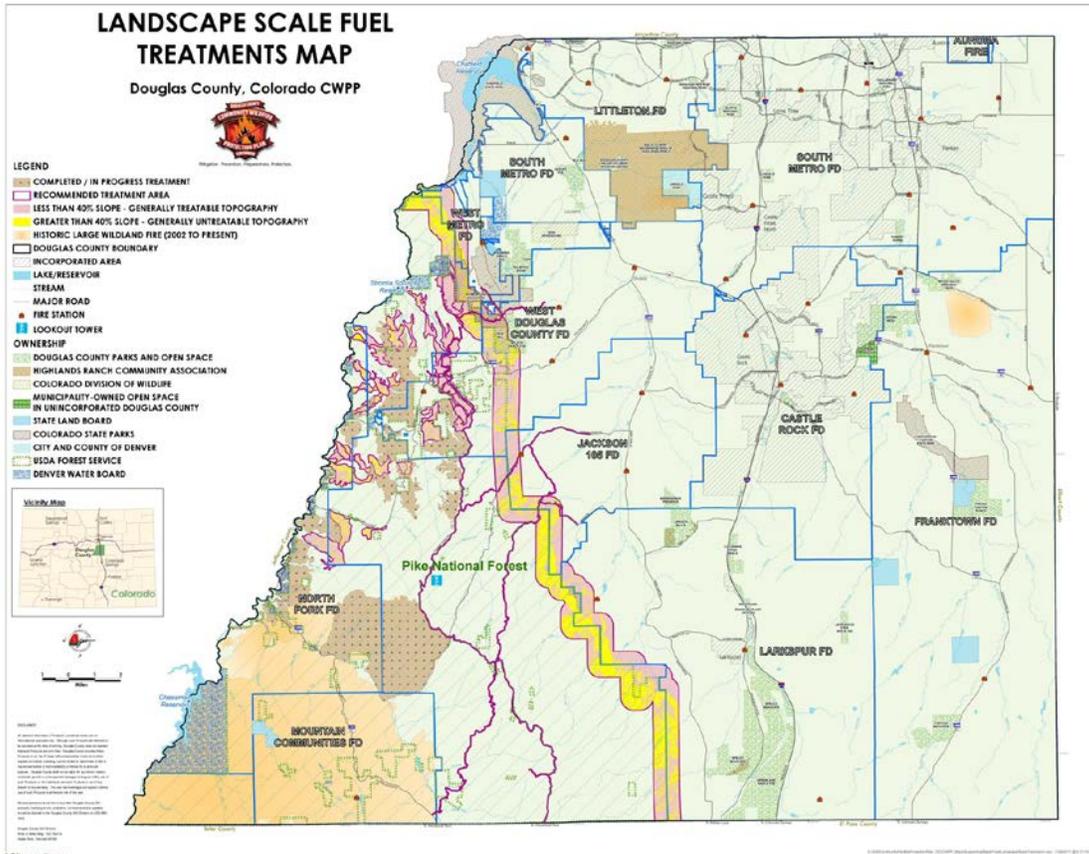
### **Fuel Treatment Recommendations**

On a landscape scale, strategic areas within Douglas County were identified where hazardous fuel reduction treatments would have significant benefit in slowing an advancing wildfire by reducing fire behavior. These areas were identified by the local wildfire professionals serving on the DC CWPP Core Team including the local fire protection district, Douglas County Mitigation Staff, CSFS, and USFS. The areas selected for treatment were based primarily off of major road systems, vegetation, and topography and focused on the creation of fuelbreaks. Fuelbreaks were only recommended for those areas where it was determined to be most effective. As a result not every community has a fuelbreak identified. However, the core team determined that it was more effective for landowners to focus on creating defensible space around their homes and to thin between homes and on community-owned lands within the community to be most effective in reducing wildfire hazards regardless if fuelbreaks were present.

Products produced as a part of Phase 2 included the *Community Wildfire Hazard Potential Map*, and the *Landscape Scale Fuel Treatments Recommendations Map* shown below.



**Community Wildfire Hazard Potential Map**



**Landscape Scale Fuel Treatments Map**

Products produced as part of Phase 2 were posted on the DC CWPP website for public review and comment and printed copies were available at local libraries around the county. They were also later presented and discussed at community meetings or fire protection district selected venues in each fire protection district as part of Phase 3.

### **Phase 3: Community Meetings**

The core team hosted community meetings in each fire protection district to describe the DC CWPP process to stakeholders and present the draft products for local-level stakeholder input. Each fire protection district determined the best format for their meetings (community meeting, open house, briefing). During this process many stakeholders demonstrated an elevated interest in creating a local-level CWPP. Attendance was higher in areas where no local-level plans exist. Many stakeholders contributed comments and suggestions during the meetings. All community meeting notes and comments can be found in Appendix B.

## **Phase 4: Draft CWPP**

During the spring of 2011 work began on the draft CWPP incorporating public comments and feedback from community meetings and submissions to the website. In July 2011 the final draft of the CWPP was reviewed by the core team and approved to be released for public comment in August. The public will have a 30 day comment period to review the plan and submit comments to the core team. The core team will review all comments and make appropriate changes to the plan before the final plan is approved.

## **Next Steps**

As the DC CWPP process evolves it has become clear the best option to continue forward momentum and collaboration is to provide some uniformity throughout the county on implementing the recommendations in this plan. Therefore, the core team will transition to an implementation team on a voluntary basis. As with any CWPP the plan should be reviewed annually and updated as necessary and approved by the core team.

# **EXISTING SITUATION**

## ***History and Background***

Colorado's Douglas County was originally established in 1861 along with 16 additional counties in the Colorado Territory by the Colorado Territorial Legislature. The county was named to honor U.S. Senator Stephen A Douglas of Illinois whose death preceded establishment of the county. Upon creation the county seat was Franktown and moved to California Ranch in 1863, and then again to Castle Rock in 1874 where it currently resides. Original boundaries of the County extended all the way to the Kansas state line (*Wikipedia.org, 2011*).

The region encompassing Douglas County was originally home to the Arapahoe and Cheyenne cultures. Members of these tribes inhabited the area between the Arkansas and South Platte Rivers. White settlers flocked to the area on rumors of gold and the ability to acquire land through homesteading. People continue to migrate into Douglas County for its unique character, available amenities, reputation for good schools, convenience to city centers and mountain recreation (*Wikipedia.org, 2011*).

Today, Douglas County consists of over 843 square miles. It is located approximately half way between Denver and Colorado Springs and serves as a bedroom community for both metropolitan areas. The traditional farming and ranching heritage of Douglas County has surrendered to rapid urbanization over the past two decades, but agriculture remains an important aspect of the county's economy and culture. Census figures estimate the county's population at 293,521 in 2010 with almost 90 percent of the people residing in the urban areas. With the rapid urbanization of population centers the county also experienced significant development in the WUI.