

Colorado Legislative Council Staff Fiscal Note

**STATE
FISCAL IMPACT**

Drafting Number: LLS 15-0907 **Date:** March 17, 2015
Prime Sponsor(s): Sen. Roberts; Garcia **Bill Status:** Senate Judiciary
 Rep. Keyser; Hamner **Fiscal Analyst:** Alex Schatz (303-866-4375)

BILL TOPIC: VETERANS FIRE CORPS FOR WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING

Fiscal Impact Summary*	FY 2015-2016	FY 2016-2017
State Revenue		
State Expenditures	\$58,710	\$95,638
Cash Funds	Repurpose cash fund expenditures. No net change. See State Expenditures section.	
Centrally Appropriated Costs**	\$58,710	\$95,638
FTE Position Change	3.0 FTE	6.0 FTE
Appropriation Required: FTE only. See State Appropriations section.		

* This summary shows changes from current law under the bill for each fiscal year.
 ** These costs are not included in the bill's appropriation. See the State Expenditures section for more information.

Summary of Legislation

This bill recognizes the existence of veterans' fire corps programs, through which certain veterans gain experience in forest management and wildland fire control. The Department of Public Safety (DPS) is authorized to use the Wildfire Preparedness Fund (WPF) to train, equip, or supervise a veterans' fire corps program hand crew.

Background

Wildfire Preparedness Fund. Under current law, the WPF may be used for wildfire preparedness activities in accordance with the Governor's direction, and as detailed in the annual Wildfire Preparedness Plan prepared by the Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC), and other specific purposes authorized by statute. For example, the 2014 Wildfire Preparedness Plan, issued April 24, 2014, includes budget items for wildland fire management, the suppression and prescribed fire program, vehicle (fire engine) maintenance, and contingency. At present, the WPF receives an annual appropriation of \$4,150,000 from the proceeds of insurance premium taxes for these purposes. Moneys in the WPF are continuously appropriated.

Veterans' Fire Corps programs in Colorado. There are three organizations in Colorado that currently maintain a veterans' fire corps program: the Southwest Conservation Corps in Durango and Salida, the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps in Steamboat Springs, and the Western Colorado Conservation Corps in Grand Junction. Each organization forms its working members into 10-member crews. In total, the three programs will stand up four or five veterans' fire corps hand crews annually, of which two to three will be available for wildland fire assignments. In current practice, the veterans' fire corps programs maintained by these organizations have been successful

at fielding crews and providing experience in wildfire mitigation projects. Due to a number of factors—including the costs of training, equipment, and supervision—these veterans' fire corps programs have had varying degrees of success in deploying for wildfire suppression and related assignments.

State Expenditures

The bill results in the reallocation of expenditures from the WPF. This does not increase state expenditures other than requiring an additional allocation of FTE to the DPS and the associated increase in centrally appropriated costs. A summary of this cost accounting is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Expenditures Under SB 15-205		
Cost Components	FY 2015-16	FY 2016-17
Crew Supervisor Personal Services	\$137,510	\$275,018
FTE	3.0	6.0
Crew Supervisor Operating Expenses	2,850	5,700
Crew Supervisor Capital Outlay Costs	28,218	0
Crew Supervisor Lease Vehicles	36,000	36,000
Training for Veterans' Fire Corps Hand Crews	120,400	12,040
Personal Protective Equipment for Hand Crews	25,000	12,500
Tools for Hand Crews	31,200	460
Reduced Expenditure on Other WPF Items	(381,178)	(341,718)
SUBTOTAL	\$0	\$0
Centrally Appropriated Costs*	58,710	95,638
TOTAL	\$58,710	\$95,638

* Centrally appropriated costs are not included in the bill's appropriation.

Assumptions. The fiscal note incorporates the following assumptions:

- The DFPC will use authority granted by the bill to train, equip, and supervise veterans' fire corps hand crews in the state to the extent practicable. This will require funding from the WPF, but will be implemented without affecting current plans and goals for wildfire preparedness. As a result, estimated costs in the fiscal note are subject to incorporation into the DFPC's Wildfire Preparedness Plan to the extent that funding is available from the WPF.
- Utilization of veterans' fire crews is consistent with current expenditures from the WPF. The DFPC will supervise up to two veterans' fire corps hand crews starting in FY 2015-16, requiring 3.0 FTE per hand crew. The DFPC will also train and equip four veterans' fire corps hand crews in the 2016 fire season (budgeted in FY 2015-16). The costs for training and equipment in FY 2016-17 and future fiscal years is based on maintaining the level of DFPC support for veterans' fire corps in FY 2015-16.

- Budgeting and expenditures for the 2015 fire season were initiated in the current fiscal year, FY 2014-15. Implementation of the bill commences in FY 2015-16 and will affect the 2016 and future fire seasons. Supervisors are hired in January 2016 to prepare for the 2016 fire season.

DFPC. To supervise each veterans' fire corps hand crew, the DFPC will employ one crew boss and two squad bosses, with a total cost in FY 2015-16 of \$204,578 for the personal services, operating costs, and capital outlay of two supervising crews hired January 1, 2016. In FY 2016-17, the first full fiscal year of implementation, the DFPC will expend \$316,718 for costs related to the supervision of hand crews. For each hand crew supervised, the DFPC will lease a vehicle.

In FY 2015-16, the DFPC will provide training and equipment that is expected to sustain at least four veterans' fire corps hand crews for multiple years. At an average cost of \$3,010 per veteran, the DFPC will provide training in fireline work and first aid for 40 veterans, at a total cost of \$120,400. Supplying 40 veterans with firefighting tools and equipment carries an estimated cost of \$56,200. In FY 2016-17, estimated costs for both training and equipment are \$25,000.

Centrally appropriated costs. Pursuant to a Joint Budget Committee policy, certain costs associated with this bill are addressed through the annual budget process and centrally appropriated in the Long Bill or supplemental appropriations bills, rather than in this bill. The centrally appropriated costs subject to this policy are estimated in the fiscal note for informational purposes and summarized in Table 2. Leased space is required for additional state fire crew, given a lack of additional space available in existing DFPC facilities.

Table 2. Centrally Appropriated Costs Under SB 15-205*		
Cost Components	FY 2015-16	FY 2016-17
Employee Insurance (Health, Life, Dental, and Short-term Disability)	\$24,052	\$48,104
Supplemental Employee Retirement Payments	10,658	23,534
Leased Space	24,000	24,000
TOTAL	\$58,710	\$95,638

*More information is available at: <http://colorado.gov/fiscalnotes>

Effective Date

The bill takes effect upon signature of the Governor, or upon becoming law without his signature.

State Appropriations

The bill requires no new spending authority to implement changes to the Wildfire Preparedness Fund. However, for FY 2015-16, the Department of Public Safety requires an additional allocation of 3.0 FTE.

State and Local Government Contacts

Public Safety
 Corrections

Personnel and Administration
 Military and Veterans Affairs

Higher Education
 Labor and Employment