

# Fountain Creek Watershed

## Flood Control & Greenway District



*The District's work, through a collaborative effort between many organizations, focuses on protecting, preserving and enhancing our waterways for the benefit of citizens and our natural habitat throughout the region for today and future generations. We care about clean and safe waterways, water quality, and enhancing the ability to fish and recreate in our waterways for improved quality of life for all.*

## Fountain Creek Chronicles

June 2020

*You are receiving this newsletter because you have expressed an interest in the Fountain Creek Watershed or Creek Week cleanup.*

**COVID 19:** Please continue to maintain social distancing and use common sense when engaging in outdoor recreation. Take advantage of the healing power of nature—in your own backyard or on a walk. Just remember to follow local public health guidance and keep six feet or more from others outside your family. Wash your hands with soap and water once you return from your adventure. Getting outdoors, being in nature, and moving our bodies is good for everyone!

## Five minutes to Help Make our Waterways Better

We have created a brief survey to help us better serve you. Please take a few minutes now to complete the survey.

Take the  
Survey

WE WANT  
TO HEAR  
FROM YOU

TAKE OUR  
SURVEY



## Connecting the dots: Dry cycles, drought, wildfires & our watershed

April showers are supposed to bring May flowers. But did you notice we didn't get much rain this spring? The **U.S. Drought Monitor's** current data reveal that El Paso County and Teller County are in moderate drought while Pueblo County is in severe drought. These worrisome drought conditions bring increased wildfire risk.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, the wildfire season now lasts longer and fires tend to be larger. One explanation is the concept of naturally occurring wet and dry cycles. In the book *New Mexico 2050*, ecologist Craig D. Allen, PhD explains that the Southwest was relatively wet between the 1970s and 1990s. A dry spell began in the late 1990s, and we are currently in this extended DRY cycle.

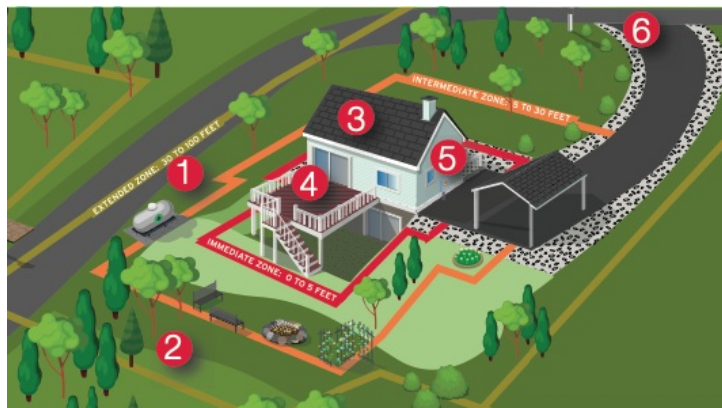
### How is our watershed impacted by wildfires?

Knowing that we're in an extended dry cycle is especially alarming, considering how severely wildfires can impact our watershed:

- Less vegetation in a burn area can reduce snowpack conditions, resulting in faster and earlier runoff.
- The soil in a burn area can become hydrophobic – it actually repels water!
- These conditions increase surface runoff and erosion and this can lead to devastating mudslides, flash floods, and debris flows that dump soil, rocks, and trees into our streams and endanger our citizens.
- Increased carbon, manganese, and fire retardant enter our streams, which decreases water quality.

### Your wildfire mitigation efforts can help our watershed.

Improving the health of our waterways benefits us all by ensuring a high standard of water quality and excellent stormwater management. Simultaneously, this creates recreational opportunities and improves natural habitat for wildlife.



Each of us can reduce the danger of fire – and its impact on our watershed – by taking these wildfire risk reduction steps, presented by Firewise USA:

1. **Home ignition zone** – Learn how to protect your home in the three ignition zones (immediate, intermediate, and extended).
2. **Landscaping and maintenance** – Prune tree branches six feet up the tree and around your home and remove bushes containing resins, oils, and waxes.
3. **Roofing and vents** – To prevent ember entry, repair loose or missing shingles and put recommended screens on roof and attic vents. Consider replacing roofs with Class A fire rated shingles.
4. **Decks and porches** – Remove vegetation and debris. Never store flammable materials such as propane tanks and firewood under decks and porches or near your house.
5. **Siding and windows** – Ideally, your home is constructed of fire-resistant siding such as brick, fiber-cement, plaster, or stucco. When it's time to replace windows, choose dual-pane tempered glass.
6. **Emergency responder access** – Is your house number clear and easy to read, even in the dark? If not, spending a few minutes on this easy task can save lives and property.
7. **Ready, set, and go** – Pay attention to fire conditions and be prepared with an evacuation plan.

*Image courtesy of NFTA*

## Spotlight: You can help create a 'fire-adaptive' community



Kannah Creek Sulfur Flower

The Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control and Greenway District, U.S. Forest Service, and other partner organizations are collaborating to support a **Wildland Fire Management Strategy** in which a key component is creating fire-adapted communities.

This means residents are knowledgeable about and actively engaged in mitigation efforts – especially those living in the wildland-urban interface.

### Take a few minutes to learn more – then take action!

- Get in-depth advice to prepare your home for wildfire from Firewise USA: Click [HERE](#).
- Learn about fire-resistant landscaping from Colorado Springs Utilities: Click [HERE](#).
- Gain insight on building a fire-adapted community and understanding wildfire issues from Fire Adapted CO (FACO), a statewide representation of stakeholders and fire organizations: Click [HERE](#).

## Digging into the Dirt - Post Waldo Canyon Fire

From elevations above 14,000 feet to rolling plains some 10,000 feet lower, the Fountain Creek Watershed is – in a word – diverse.

Its unique ecosystems range from alpine tundra to grasslands, Pike's Peak's rain shadow effect creates varying precipitation across its northeastern face, and over 50 creeks and streams empty their watery



contents ultimately into Fountain Creek's main channel.

We can see these distinctions up and down our home watershed, but did you ever think about what happens to land and water *after* a fire?

Once the Waldo Canyon Fire was put out on July 10, 2012, the Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) report detailed the severity of the burned area: 41% was classified as low severity burn, 40% was classified as moderate severity, and 19% was classified as high severity burn.



After a rainfall these burned areas are subject to increased erosion and debris flows. These conditions are made worse due to the steep slopes throughout the landscape.

After the fire, the roots of plants and leaf litter layers that help stabilize soils, reduce erosion, and slow water flows allowing time for it to slowly percolate into the soil, have been burned away. **READ**

**MORE**

The Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control and Greenway District presents

## The 2020 Photo Contest

*Accepting submissions June 24 - July 15*



We want to see the watershed through your eyes!

The Fountain Creek Watershed District is thrilled to announce our first ever social media photo contest! As our community perseveres through this unprecedented time, it is important to continue to raise awareness and to support our public lands and outdoor spaces.

We want to provide a safe, virtual way to see the District through the eyes of our wonderful community members. Any photos of people, wildlife, water, trails, or projects that highlight the Fountain Creek Watershed District will be accepted.

The winning photographers will receive gift certificates good for use at your favorite Brewshed Alliance brewery or taphouse! The winning photos will also be featured on our social media pages (**Facebook**, **Instagram** and **Twitter**) and for future watershed initiatives.

## The Rules

- Photos should be submitted by email to [creekweeksoco@gmail.com](mailto:creekweeksoco@gmail.com) from June 24 - July 15. For each entry, please include your name, email and phone number, location of photograph, and (optional) a caption for the photo.
- Photos must be taken within the boundaries of the Fountain Creek Watershed District\* *\*The District is comprised of El Paso and Pueblo Counties and encompasses the seven municipalities of Pueblo, Colorado Springs, Fountain, Manitou Springs, Green Mountain Falls, Palmer Lake and Monument*
- Maximum 10 photo submissions per photographer
- Photos must be in digital format
- Photographer must provide the names and contact information of all identifiable people in the photo

By entering the contest, entrants agree that all photos submitted can be used by the Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control and Greenway District.

The complete list of rules can be found on the [website](#). For any additional questions please contact [creekweeksoco@gmail.com](mailto:creekweeksoco@gmail.com)

## Waldo Canyon Eight Years After the Fire



The Waldo Canyon Fire began June 23, 2012 burning 18,247 acres within the Fountain Creek watershed west of Colorado Springs.

The fire burned primarily Ponderosa Pine and mixed-conifer forest lands - all of which drain into four major sub-watersheds: Fountain Creek, Camp Creek, Douglas Creek, and Monument Creek that ultimately flow to the Arkansas River.

A Master Plan for Watershed Restoration and Sediment Reduction was developed to direct efforts in the highest risk areas as well as for potential associated downstream damage. The burned area resulted in an average annual change in water yield of 2.1 inches, and total introduced sediment estimated to be 51,479 tons per year.

Recovery recommendations predicted that at least 75% of potential sediment flows can be reduced by increasing vegetation to over 65% and performing treatment measures that reduce surface erosion.

Monitoring initiatives indicate long-term success of these post-fire treatments in the Waldo Canyon burn scar. Five years after the fire, the U.S. Forest Service declared the burn scar 70% revegetated.

Table 1. Summary of estimated pre- and post-fire sediment yields by process.

Watershed	Hydrologic Processes				Hillslope Processes	Roads and Trails	Channel Processes	Total Introduced Sediment (tons/yr)
	Water Yield (acre-ft/yr)		Flow-Related Sediment (tons/yr)		Surface Erosion (tons/yr)	(tons/yr)	Streambank Erosion (tons/yr)	
	Pre-Fire	Post-Fire	Pre-Fire	Post-Fire				
Camp Creek	2,115	3,702	71	16,897	4,193	751	6,750	11,694
Douglas Creek	1,511	2,156	47	7,834	4,057	236	6,108	10,401
Fountain Creek	2,500	4,822	90	25,075	7,303	619	11,318	19,241
West Monument Creek	2,747	4,035	104	7,489	2,532	429	7,183	10,143
<b>Totals</b>	<b>8,873</b>	<b>14,715</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>57,295</b>	<b>18,085</b>	<b>2,035</b>	<b>31,359</b>	<b>51,479</b>

One exciting advancement for recreationalists was the **Re-Imagine Waldo Canyon** planning

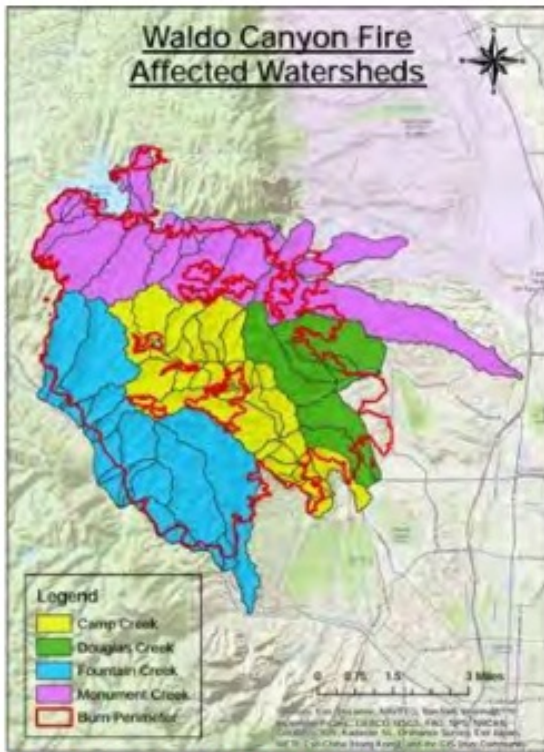


Figure 1. Major watershed delineation of Camp Creek, Douglas Creek, Fountain Creek, and West Monument Creek (Rosgen et al., 2013).

process.

The Rocky Mountain Field Institute received a State Trails Planning Grant leading an 18-month public process to coordinate and plan the future of the Waldo Canyon in the aftermath of the 2012 Waldo Canyon Fire.

A final project **report**, detailing the process was created, and in the spring of 2019, the Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory board unanimously recommended the City of Colorado Springs acquire over 340 acres of open space. This land could serve as future trail access to the Waldo Canyon area.

Work still continues in the burn scar, including flooding and debris flow reductions, increasing native vegetation cover, promoting re-opening of public access when deemed safe and appropriate, and community engagement. For

more information and to get involved, contact our friends at **Rocky Mountain Field Institute**.

## Virtual Liquid Lecture

### Meet the Fountain Creek Water Sentinels

Wed., June 24th, 5-6pm Online Zoom Meeting Format



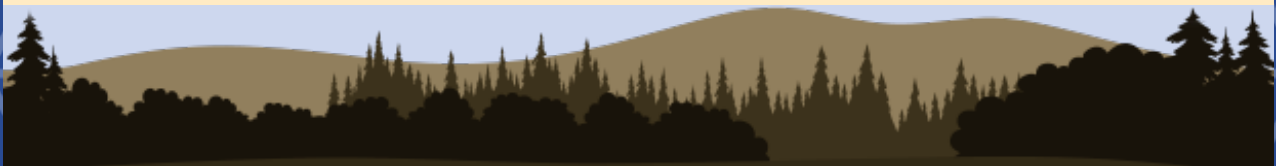
Join us for a fun, casual conversation about our local Watershed Warriors, the Fountain Creek Water Sentinels. Teams of volunteers work on data collection, litter cleanups and more during their monthly events. Learn about the plants and animals they are tracking, when their cleanups are, and how they are working with school children to educate them on these important issues.

Free, limit 100 people. RSVP on the Watershed District's [Facebook page](#) to receive Zoom meeting link. BYOB - beer, burbon, bubbly water, or brewed coffee to enjoy during the discussion!

### UPCOMING MEETINGS

There will be opportunities to meet virtually with Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control and Greenway District Committees. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS - [CLICK HERE](#)**



Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control & Greenway District

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Connect with us

