

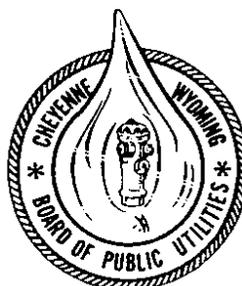
Media Release

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Watershed Management from Forests to Faucets

Cheyenne, WY- According to National Wildfire Coordinating Group's website, there are fifteen active wildfires in Wyoming to date. The City of Cheyenne Board of Public Utilities (BOPU) depends on healthy forests and watersheds to provide high quality water to an estimated 77,000 people and over 1,700 businesses in the Cheyenne area. Cheyenne's water system crosses three mountain ranges, Sierra Madre, Medicine Bow and Laramie Mountains, with 216 miles of pipelines and several water-supply reservoirs.

Unfortunately, Wyoming forest's health has been compromised with the bark beetle epidemic. Forest fires in beetle-killed areas burn not only hotter and faster, but can trigger erosional issues that may damage dams, pipelines and shrink water storage capabilities in reservoirs and alter water quality characteristics. Nutrient and contaminant releases from forest fires can make treating water more difficult and cause unwanted tastes and odor issues.

Experience from the Denver's 150,000 acre wildfires unleashed an estimated one million cubic yards of sediment into Strontia reservoir. Denver Water has spent more than \$26 million on water quality treatment, sediment and debris removal, reclamation techniques and infrastructure projects as a result of the Buffalo Creek and Hayman forest fires.

"It's not a matter *if* we'll have a wildfire that will impact Cheyenne's water supply but *when*," said Dena Egenhoff, the BOPU's water conservation manager. "Mitigation efforts BOPU has taken will provide tools to deal with post-fire water quality impact, but additional measures are needed."

Though wildfires play a natural and necessary role in forest ecosystems, BOPU is partnering with the Wyoming Water Development Office on a Cheyenne Municipal Watershed Wildfire Hazard Mitigation Assessment project. This project outlines site-specific forest management treatments that will minimize impacts to BOPU's supply reservoirs and infrastructure. Become an active participant as this project unfolds. Please contact Wyoming Water Development Office at tony.rutherford@wyo.gov or contact BOPU at degenhoff@cheyennebopu.org for the next Wildfire Hazard project meeting and become involved protecting our water resources.

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