



Board of County Commissioners
Matt Salka, Chair
Elizabeth Philbrick, Vice Chair
Marsha Porter-Norton, Commissioner

1101 East 2nd Ave
Durango, CO 81301
(970)382-6219

March 24, 2026

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senator, Colorado
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
United States Senator, Colorado
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Letter of Support for the Durango Fire Protection District Interagency Wildlife Center

Dear Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper:

The La Plata County Board of County Commissioners supports the Durango Fire Protection District's (DFPD) request for Congressionally Directed Spending to construct an Interagency Wildfire Center at the intersection of US Highway 160 and State Highway 172 in Southwest Colorado. This project directly addresses a critical regional need for coordinated wildfire response and leverages existing DFPD-owned land and a wildfire program that has been financially sustainable since 2008.

Southwest Colorado has experienced three of the ten largest wildfires in state history—two within DFPD's jurisdiction—resulting in extensive evacuations and serious economic disruption. The proposed facility will enhance regional preparedness and reduce long-term federal, state, and local firefighting costs by strengthening coordination and improving initial capabilities in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

DFPD has a proven record of success in interagency collaboration and leadership, working closely with the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, and Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control. The district provides mutual aid across five counties in Colorado and New Mexico and actively supports emergency management, large-scale wildfire planning, and Incident Management Teams at both local and national levels.

Through initiatives like the Four Corners Wildfire Academy, which recently trained over 250 firefighters at no cost, DFPD continues to demonstrate its capacity to deliver impactful outcomes and foster interagency cooperation. Establishing a permanent Interagency Wildfire Center will formalize and expand this successful collaboration, providing essential infrastructure for personnel, equipment, and training to support regional firefighting agencies.

This funding represents a strategic investment in regional resilience, federal-state efficiency, and the safety of communities across the Four Corners region.

Thank you for your consideration.

LA PLATA COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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Matt Salka
Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marsha Porter-Norton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'M'.

Marsha Porter-Norton
Commissioner