

OFFICE OF THE
LEGISLATIVE
FISCAL
ANALYST

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DIRECTOR

MEMORANDUM FOR EXECUTIVE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

FROM: Ivan Djambov, Finance Manager
DATE: September 11, 2020
SUBJECT: Fire Suppression and Rehabilitation Costs

The Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands is responsible for the fire management on Utah's non-federal lands. During the last three general sessions, the Legislature had to provide supplemental appropriations from the General Fund for fire suppression and rehabilitation costs:

- FY 2018: \$19.4 million (for the 2017 fire season),
- FY 2019: \$19.8 million (for the 2018 fire season), and
- FY 2020: \$12.9 million (for the 2019 fire season).

During the 2020 General Session and subsequent special sessions, the Legislature invested in measures to reduce the severity of wildfires, including:

- \$1.5 million one-time for fire mitigation and treatment,
- \$1.0 million one-time for a catastrophic wildfire reduction strategy (from the Sovereign Lands Management Restricted Account),
- \$1.7 million ongoing for rehabilitation after fires occur, and
- \$135,000 ongoing for a wildfire prevention employee (from the Sovereign Lands Management Restricted Account).

Utah's fire season is from May to October. Though the final numbers for the 2020 fire season are not yet available, based on preliminary data, in terms of number of fires and fire suppression costs to date, the 2020 fire season is likely going to be record setting. Brian Cottam, Director of the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands will make a presentation to EAC on September 15, 2020 about the 2020 fire season, will address the anticipated fire suppression and rehabilitation costs, and will answer legislators' questions.

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