



Board Agenda Background

Date: 3/17/2026
To: Board of County Commissioners
Through: Colton Rohloff, County Manager
Ronald Thornton, Sheriff
From: Clarissa Boggs-Blake, Director of the Office of Emergency Management
Subject: Work Session: Fire Restrictions Implementation

RECOMMENDATION

The Clear Creek County Office of Emergency Management (OEM), the Clear Creek Fire Authority (CCFA), and the Clear Creek County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) recommends that the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) acknowledge and support the CCSO's plan to implement and rescind County-wide fire restrictions response measures more fluidly during off-fire seasons, based on real-time fire weather conditions and risk indicators.

Under this approach, when any portion of the County is placed under a Red Flag Warning, which represents high fire danger, the entire County would move into Stage 1 Fire Restrictions until midnight of the day the Red Flag Warning expires. This recommendation aligns with the best regional practices and improves the County's ability to respond rapidly to changing fire risk conditions.

BACKGROUND

Clear Creek County experiences highly variable weather, fuel moisture, and wind conditions throughout the year, including outside of traditional wildfire seasons. These conditions can rapidly elevate fire risk and create public safety concerns.

Historically, fire restrictions have been implemented through a formal and time-intensive process, which can limit the County's ability to respond effectively to short-duration or rapidly developing high-risk conditions.

To address this issue, a meeting was convened with representatives from the County Attorney's Office, County Manager's Office, Clear Creek County Sheriff's Office, Clear Creek County Office of Emergency Management, and Clear Creek Fire Authority. All parties agreed that, while CCSO has clear operational authority to move in and out of fire restrictions, applying greater intentionality and consistency through established risk indicators will improve responsiveness, enhance public safety outcomes, and increase overall operational efficiency.

Comparable approaches are currently in use by neighboring jurisdictions, including the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office and the Gilpin County Sheriff's Office.

ANALYSIS

This approach provides the Clear Creek County Sheriff's Office with increased operational flexibility to respond quickly to changing fire weather conditions and localized risk indicators. By allowing restrictions to be implemented immediately when Red Flag Warnings are issued, the CCSO can reduce delays associated with more formalized processes. This framework also supports the timely removal of restrictions when conditions improve. Applying restrictions County-wide when any area presents elevated risk promotes consistency, reduces public confusion, and strengthens coordinated enforcement and messaging.



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The County Attorney's Office and County Manager's Office have reviewed this operational approach and determined that it can be implemented within existing legal and administrative authority. No ordinance changes or additional legislative actions are required at this time, allowing the County to move forward efficiently while remaining compliant with applicable laws and policies.

Public communication will be a critical component of successful implementation. The proposed approach includes posting notices at the County Administration Building, using social media platforms, updating key roadside signage as deputies are available, and coordinating messaging with partner agencies and Public Information Officers. This multi-channel strategy will help ensure residents, visitors, and stakeholders receive timely, clear, and consistent information regarding restrictions.

Adopting this framework also promotes regional consistency with neighboring jurisdictions that utilize dynamic fire restriction models. Aligning with surrounding counties supports public understanding and compliance, particularly for residents and visitors who regularly travel across county lines. Consistent practices reduce uncertainty and enhance cooperative enforcement efforts.

From a risk management and public safety perspective, this model reduces the likelihood of human-caused wildfire ignitions, enhances responder safety, supports early intervention, and limits community exposure during extreme fire weather. By enabling early and decisive action, the County can reduce the potential for large-scale incidents, minimize operational strain on emergency services and lower long-term recovery and suppression costs.

CONCLUSION

Providing the Clear Creek County Sheriff's Office with clear authority to implement and rescind fire restrictions in real time represents a proactive, risk-based approach to wildfire and emergency management.

This framework improves responsiveness to changing conditions, enhances public safety, aligns with regional best practices, and reflects the consensus of County leadership, legal counsel, and fire partners. It requires no additional legislative action and can be implemented using existing resources and communication channels.

Staff recommend that the Board acknowledge and support this operational approach as an effective tool for protecting residents, visitors, and first responders during periods of elevated fire risk.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Ordinance No. 16 - Banning of Open Fires
2. Resolution R-01-83 - Resolution Invoking the Clear Creek County Sheriff to Implement and Lift Fire Bans in Clear Creek County