

Greg Hanson

Warning Coordination Meteorologist, NOAA/National Weather Service

NON-COMPETITIVE DIVISION

Trouble is More than a Name: NWS WFO Boulder Decision Support Services for the East Troublesome Fire

The East Troublesome Fire exhibited many troubling characteristics, including a late-fall, nocturnal explosive run in the Colorado Rockies. This poster will focus on Impact Based Decision Support Services (IDSS) provided by NWS Boulder to Deep Relationship Core Partners during a period of explosive wildfire growth that began the afternoon of October 21 and ended with a fall snow storm on October 24 2020. The East Troublesome Fire in Grand County, CO was first reported on October 14 2020, and was declared contained on November 30 2020. At a total of 192,457 acres, it was the second largest fire in Colorado history, and most of the burned area was gained in several hours of almost unimaginable growth. The unique nature of the growth resulted in several aspects of life saving IDSS.

High winds, warm temperatures, and low humidity caused an ideal environment for rapid fire growth and extreme fire behavior that began on October 21. The fire exploded, increasing its size ten-fold from 18,550 acres to 187,964 acres during this period. Conventional wisdom holds that the 5 miles of rocky alpine tundra on the Continental Divide at an elevation above 11,500 ft MSL is an effective fire break, however the fire jumped the divide and began burning in Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) just above Estes Park in Larimer County. Decision support efforts were primarily twofold: Amplifying evacuation messaging for Grand County the night of October 21, and notification of and support for the fire's continued growth east of

the Continental Divide into (RMNP) and toward the town of Estes Park CO for a massive evacuation effort. The NWS office in Boulder was the first agency to recognize the fire had jumped the divide, and provided initial notification to an incredulous Larimer County and RMNP of its presence.

Presentation Theme: Decision Support Services from the National Weather Service to Emergency Managers in an operational setting by offering assistance in public messaging and situational awareness.

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