

Wildfires & Water Quality

According to the USGS, about 80 percent of the fresh water supplies in the United States originate on forestlands. Protection of these supplies from both natural and man-made threats is essential for sustainability of drinking [water quality](#).

The City of Golden is lucky to have Clear Creek as its drinking water source, however that will not play into our best interests if and when there is a wildfire in the watershed, since it is our only drinking water source. Most other public water systems have the option of pulling water from another source if their main source has been affected by wildfire, we do not. The City of Golden's Water Treatment Plant will be forced to treat the water that comes down from the mountains.

In 1993, Golden became part of the Upper Clear Creek Watershed Association (UCCWA), a group of entities responsible for overseeing water quality and water resources issues through the Upper Clear Creek Watershed. UCCWA provides a cooperative effort to address watershed improvement projects and created a call down system that is activated when anything occurs upstream of our drinking water intake. This call down is regularly activated when there are spills of any kind in the watershed and will be a great way of knowing when there is a fire upstream of the City.

The City of Golden continues to work with the Colorado School of Mines (CSM) and their Senior Design classes. The [ESGN 530](#) CSM class of 2012 focused on the impacts of wildfire in the Clear Creek Watershed and its effects on the City of Golden's Drinking Water Supply. The 2014 [CSM Senior Design](#) class focused on a location for a sedimentation basin should a wildfire event occur in the Clear Creek watershed. In addition to working with CSM, the City of Golden regularly participates with the Watershed Wildfire Protection Group which was formed to identify risks to water supplies from wildfires in Colorado. More information about the group can be found on the [JW Assoc website](#).

Wildfire is always a concern, and it is a more potent threat during droughts and dry spells. We will continue to work with upstream communities and other Clear Creek water users and combine efforts to lower the wildfire risk to our watershed for the future. The hope is to find innovative and proactive pre fire suppression techniques, and reactive post fire actions in order to protect the watershed and water supply.