

What's News in Teller County

By **Mountain Jackpot** - August 20, 2021



Rick Langenberg and Bob Volpe

Mitigation Plans Could Escalate Dramatically for Pike National Forest

With a little help from Uncle Sam, Teller County may reap the benefits of a Department of Defense program, aimed at protecting military installations in the area.

Ultimately, the effort, part of the REPI (Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program) program could lead to a major increase in mitigation efforts for the Pike National Forest.

That's the hope of the Teller County Commissioners. Commissioner Erik Stone briefly outlined the program at last week's meeting. The effort also will involve a partnership with the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments.

The Department of Defense REPI program is aimed at protecting military installations in the region, and can involve millions in funds.

But ultimately, Stone believes it could set the stage for mitigation efforts to greatly expand in the Pike National Forest, one of the big red light areas of pending threats for military hubs in the region. The threat of wildfires is a growing concern for military installations in the Pikes Peak region, noted Stone.

Currently, about 3,000 acres are getting treated in the Pike National Forest, a figure well short of what is needed.

This could increase to 100,000 acres, if the program moves forward as projected.

Stone sees this as a big benefit for Teller. He notes that the U.S. Forest Service doesn't have enough funds to deal with growing demands for mitigation and protection against devastating wildland fires. County officials and neighborhood groups have been striving to mitigate more acres on both private and public lands, but this task is often overwhelming.

This effort could escalate with the REPI program, according to Stone.

The REPI effort, which allocates millions of funds, basically is designed to protect military installations by "helping remove and avoid land use conflicts near installations and addressing regulatory restrictions that inhibit military activities," according to REPI website. These projects "contribute to the longevity of working farms, forests and ranchlands, increase recreational and open space opportunities for nearby residents and military families and protect against military relocations that would adversely affect the local economy.'

Mitigation of the surrounding Pike National Forest is expected to top the list of concerns.

Big Dollar Requests Proposed For Sheriff Department and Office of Emergency Management