

From Emergency Response to Ecosystem Recovery at Scale

Cameron Peak Fire Mitigation



Location: Greeley, Colorado

Clients: AlpineEco | Coalition Poudre River Watershed | Big Thompson Watershed Coalition | City of Greeley | Larimer County

The Problem:

The Cameron Peak Fire ignited west of Fort Collins on August 13, 2020, burning more than 209,000 acres across the Cache la Poudre and Big Thompson watersheds, becoming Colorado's largest wildfire at the time. The impacts extended beyond the burn scar. Severe burn areas and steep mountain terrain created conditions where a typical 10-year storm could produce flood and debris flow impacts comparable to a 100-year event, putting 12 mountain communities, critical transportation corridors, and a major municipal water supply at risk.

Those risks became reality on July 20, 2021, when a relatively modest storm triggered a catastrophic debris flow in Black Hollow Creek, a severely burned drainage area identified by Ayres as the highest-priority risk. The event destroyed eight homes and claimed four lives. Simultaneously, post-fire sediment and water quality issues periodically disrupted the City of Greeley's water treatment plant, threatening a primary drinking water source for thousands of residents.

The Solution:

Ayres partnered with the City of Greeley, the Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed, the Big Thompson Watershed Coalition, NRCS, Larimer County, and the U.S. Forest Service to implement a watershed-scale recovery strategy. Using hydrologic modeling, they developed a triage framework to prioritize risks and target investments that would have the greatest impact.

Two Emergency Watershed Protection programs delivered more than two dozen projects and supported aerial mulching across nearly 12,000 acres of burned terrain. As conditions stabilized, Ayres led more than 32 restoration projects, creating a scalable model for watershed recovery and community resilience.



Fort Collins, CO

