

GOLD MOUNTAIN FIRE
RECOVERY REPORT
RECOVERY EFFORTS
THROUGH AUGUST 6, 2026

Recovery Report



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Executive Summary

The Gold Mountain Fire began on June 27, 2026, and rapidly evolved into one of the most complex incidents in Ouray County's history. While suppression efforts remained the immediate priority during the early stages of the incident, it quickly became evident that the long-term impacts of the fire would extend well beyond wildfire containment. Burned watersheds, critical infrastructure, private property, the possibility of burned historic mining features, and the continued threat of flash flooding and debris flows created conditions requiring recovery planning long before fire suppression operations concluded.

Those concerns became reality following significant debris flow events on July 26 and July 29, 2026, which resulted in the destruction of homes, damage to public infrastructure, changes to stream channels, and ongoing threats to residents throughout the burn scar. Recovery efforts immediately shifted from planning to implementation.

Recognizing that recovery would require years rather than months, Ouray County established a coordinated recovery organization within the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Recovery efforts were initially led by Deputy County Attorney Bob Perry during the early stages of the incident. In recent weeks, leadership of the recovery effort has transitioned to Emergency Manager Glenn Boyd and County Manager Antonio Mendez. Together, they are coordinating recovery operations in close partnership with county departments, state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, engineering consultants, and community stakeholders. Since the beginning of recovery operations, the County has focused on six strategic priorities:

- Protecting life and property from additional flooding and debris flows.
- Restoring damaged watersheds and stream channels.
- Coordinating state and federal technical assistance.
- Identifying and pursuing available recovery funding.
- Supporting residents and businesses impacted by the fire and debris flows.
- Building long-term resilience through mitigation and future recovery planning.

Significant accomplishments during the reporting period include:

- Establishment of a formal Recovery Organization within the EOC.
- Assignment of dedicated Recovery Leads.
- Coordination with DHSEM, DOLA, CWCB, DFPC, NRCS and numerous additional state and federal agencies.
- Bringing in the State Recovery Task Force.
- Execution of the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program agreement.
- Selection of KLJ Engineering as the County's engineering consultant.
- Development of multiple Emergency Watershed Protection projects.
- Coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding potential recovery assistance.
- Coordination with NRCS regarding watershed stabilization.
- Development of engineering assessments utilizing DFPC Multi-Mission Aircraft imagery.



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- Establishment of disaster donation partnerships with the Telluride Foundation and the Western Colorado Community Foundation.
- Initiation of discussions regarding long-term disaster funding through a countywide ballot initiative.
- Evaluation of property tax relief options.
- Designation of a dedicated recovery point of contact for residents of Ponderosa Village.
- Continued public outreach through community meetings and public information releases.
- Initiation of historic mine hazard assessments within the burn scar.

Recovery efforts remain ongoing. Although significant progress has been made in establishing the organizational framework necessary for long-term recovery, many recovery projects remain in the planning and design phase due to the complexity of the watershed impacts, environmental permitting requirements, engineering analysis, and funding coordination.

The County anticipates that recovery activities associated with the Gold Mountain Fire will continue for multiple years (3-7) and will require sustained coordination between local, state, federal, nonprofit, and private partners.

Transition from Response to Recovery

Unlike many disasters where response operations conclude before recovery begins, the Gold Mountain Fire required recovery planning to occur simultaneously with emergency response operations. As fire suppression activities continued throughout July, Ouray County recognized that the long-term impacts of the incident would extend well beyond wildfire containment. Burned watersheds, unstable slopes, damaged infrastructure, and the potential for post-fire flooding required immediate attention in order to reduce future risks to the community.

The Emergency Operations Center began transitioning from a response-focused organization to a dual response and recovery operation while the Incident Management Team continued wildfire suppression efforts. This approach ensured that planning for watershed stabilization, infrastructure repair, financial recovery, public assistance, and long-term mitigation began before suppression activities concluded.

The transition accelerated following the July 26 and July 29 debris flow events. Those storms confirmed many of the hazards that had been identified during initial recovery planning. Multiple homes were destroyed or damaged, stream channels shifted, transportation infrastructure sustained additional impacts, and residents throughout the burn scar experienced renewed threats to life and property.

In response, Ouray County formally expanded its recovery organization and began coordinating extensive state and federal recovery resources. Recovery priorities shifted from planning to implementation while maintaining the flexibility necessary to respond to additional rainfall events and evolving hazards.

Rather than viewing recovery as a separate phase of the incident, Ouray County adopted a whole-community approach in which response, recovery, mitigation, and preparedness continued simultaneously. This strategy allowed the County to immediately pursue federal assistance programs,



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engineering support, watershed stabilization projects, financial recovery opportunities, and community recovery initiatives while continuing to protect residents from ongoing hazards.

Recovery Organization and Interagency Coordination

Successful long-term recovery from the Gold Mountain Fire has required coordination among local, state, federal, nonprofit, and private-sector partners. Recognizing that recovery would continue long after emergency response operations concluded, Ouray County established a formal recovery organization within the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to coordinate recovery activities, identify funding opportunities, develop mitigation projects, and serve as the central point for interagency collaboration.

In recent weeks, Emergency Manager Glenn Boyd and County Manager Antonio Mendez formally transitioned into Recovery Lead roles while continuing to fulfill their existing incident and day-to-day responsibilities. This dual-role approach ensured continuity between response and recovery operations and allowed recovery planning to advance while emergency response activities continued. The Recovery Leads have coordinated recovery planning meetings, prioritized projects, facilitated communication between agencies..

The recovery organization has emphasized a whole-community approach that integrates county departments, municipalities, state agencies, federal partners, engineering consultants, nonprofit organizations, and affected residents into a unified recovery effort. Regular coordination meetings have been held to identify emerging needs, eliminate duplication of effort, and ensure recovery projects are prioritized based on life safety, risk reduction, and community impact.

State assistance has been instrumental in establishing the County's recovery program. The Colorado Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) has provided technical guidance, coordinated state resources, and assisted the County in identifying applicable state and federal recovery programs. The Colorado Division of Local Affairs (DOLA) has worked alongside DHSEM to identify long-term recovery resources and provide technical assistance for community recovery planning.

The Colorado State Recovery Task Force deployed to Ouray County through August 5, 2026, to work directly with Emergency Management staff. The Task Force assisted in developing requests for assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, identifying damage assessment priorities, coordinating recovery partners, and helping establish a long-term recovery strategy. Their support has provided the County with a structured approach for navigating complex state and federal recovery programs.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) representatives have worked closely with the County to evaluate watershed impacts and discuss opportunities under the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program. NRCS personnel, including Clint Evans, have coordinated field reviews of Cutler Creek and surrounding watersheds to identify emergency stabilization needs and develop future mitigation projects.



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To support engineering analysis, the County requested assistance through the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) for a Multi-Mission Aircraft (MMA) flight to capture high-resolution aerial imagery of Cutler Creek, Crooked Tree Creek, Dexter Creek, Ponderosa Village, the Uncompahgre River corridor, and Idarado. These data will support engineering design, damage documentation, grant applications, and project prioritization.

Emergency Management has coordinated directly with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding potential technical assistance and recovery support. Corps representatives are scheduled to conduct field assessments on August 10, 2026, focusing on Dexter Creek and potentially Cutler Creek to evaluate watershed conditions and identify opportunities for federal involvement.

The County has also initiated coordination regarding historic mining features located within the burn scar. Emergency Management has worked with Jeff Luttrell to evaluate potential hazards associated with abandoned and closed mine sites that may have been affected by wildfire and subsequent debris flows. A technical assessment team will review these sites to determine whether additional stabilization or mitigation measures are necessary to protect public safety and downstream resources.

As engineering and technical evaluations continue, Ouray County remains committed to maintaining close coordination with state and federal partners to ensure recovery efforts are aligned, funding opportunities are maximized, and mitigation projects reduce future disaster risk for the community.

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP), Engineering, and Watershed Recovery

One of the highest recovery priorities following the Gold Mountain Fire has been reducing the long-term threat posed by post-fire flooding and debris flows. Burned watersheds throughout the incident area have experienced a significant loss of vegetation and soil stability, substantially increasing runoff potential during even moderate rainfall events. Subsequent storms on July 26 and July 29 confirmed these concerns when multiple debris flows damaged homes, altered stream channels, impacted county infrastructure, and created ongoing threats to public safety.

Recognizing the magnitude of these impacts, Ouray County immediately began pursuing federal assistance through the United States Department of Agriculture's Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). County staff coordinated closely with NRCS representatives to determine program eligibility, identify priority watersheds, and initiate the documentation required for emergency watershed stabilization projects.

A significant milestone was achieved when Ouray County executed the EWP Program agreement, allowing the County to move from planning into project development. Immediately following execution of the agreement, a selection committee evaluated qualified engineering firms to provide the technical services necessary to support EWP implementation. Following completion of the procurement process, Ouray County executed an agreement with KIJ Engineering to provide engineering and design services



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under the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program. The engineering team began coordinating with County staff and participating in field tours to evaluate damages and identify potential emergency stabilization projects.

Initial engineering efforts will focused on the Cutler Creek watershed, Dexter Creek, Crooked Tree Creek, Ponderosa Village, the Uncompahgre River corridor, and additional drainages impacted by post-fire flooding. These assessments are intended to identify immediate threats to life and property while also developing long-term mitigation strategies designed to reduce future flood and debris flow impacts.

NRCS District Conservationist Clint Evans has worked directly with Ouray County to conduct field assessments within the Cutler Creek drainage. These site visits are evaluating stream stability, debris accumulation, erosion, and opportunities for emergency watershed stabilization. Information collected during these assessments will be used to prioritize EWP projects and support future funding requests.

To supplement field investigations, Ouray County requested assistance through the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) for a Multi-Mission Aircraft (MMA) flight following the July 29 debris flow event. The flight collected high-resolution aerial imagery of Cutler Creek, Crooked Tree Creek, Dexter Creek, Ponderosa Village, the affected reach of the Uncompahgre River, and the Idarado area. The imagery will assist engineers, GIS personnel, and recovery planners in documenting damages, measuring debris deposition, identifying channel migration, and prioritizing future mitigation projects.

Recovery planning has emphasized that watershed recovery cannot focus solely on repairing existing damage. Engineering efforts are also evaluating opportunities to reduce the impacts of future storm events through channel stabilization, debris removal, erosion control, and other mitigation measures that improve community resilience. This approach supports both the County's immediate recovery objectives and its long-term hazard mitigation strategy.

Residents of Ponderosa Village have consistently expressed concern regarding debris remaining lodged against homes, bridges, and drainage channels. These concerns have reinforced the need to accelerate engineering evaluations and mitigation planning before additional rainfall events occur. The County continues working with engineering consultants, state agencies, and federal partners to identify projects that can be implemented as quickly as possible while remaining eligible for available recovery funding.

The County has also coordinated with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to evaluate additional opportunities for technical assistance. Corps representatives are scheduled to conduct field reviews of Dexter Creek and potentially Cutler Creek on August 10, 2026. Their assessment will complement ongoing NRCS and engineering evaluations and help identify additional federal resources that may be available to support long-term watershed recovery.

Collectively, these engineering and watershed recovery efforts represent one of the most significant components of the County's overall recovery strategy. Restoring watershed function and reducing future flood risk remain essential to protecting lives, restoring community confidence, and supporting the long-term recovery of the Gold Mountain Fire burn area.



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The County has now executed the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) agreement and entered into a contract with KLJ Engineering to provide engineering services for the program. KLJ Engineering will begin evaluating and designing mitigation measures for hazard areas within Dexter Creek, Cutler Creek, and Crooked Tree Creek as part of the County's watershed recovery strategy.

Damage Assessment, Community Recovery, and Resident Assistance

The Gold Mountain Fire and the subsequent post-fire debris flow events produced widespread impacts throughout the burn scar, requiring Ouray County to rapidly transition from emergency response into coordinated damage assessment and community recovery operations. Damage assessment efforts served not only to document losses for potential state and federal assistance but also to establish priorities for engineering, watershed stabilization, infrastructure repair, and long-term community recovery.

Unlike many disasters where damages are confined to a single event, recovery following the Gold Mountain Fire has remained dynamic. Burned watersheds continue to produce flooding and debris flows during rainfall events, requiring repeated reassessments of damaged areas and continual refinement of recovery priorities.

Initial Damage Assessments

Immediately following the July 29, 2026 debris flow event, Ouray County initiated coordinated damage assessments utilizing Emergency Management, local government personnel, state recovery specialists, and engineering partners. The purpose of these assessments was to document structural damage, identify immediate threats to public safety, and determine eligibility for state and federal recovery programs.

Five homes destroyed, including two short-term rental properties and three primary residences.

One travel trailer utilized as a primary residence destroyed.

Five additional homes sustaining major damage but remaining structurally standing.

Thirteen homes inspected and determined to have no significant structural damage despite debris impacts.

These assessments became the foundation for recovery planning and were used in coordination with the State Recovery Task Force, DHSEM, FEMA partners, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding potential assistance programs.



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Community Recovery Planning

Recovery planning expanded beyond documenting damages to restoring neighborhoods, infrastructure, and community resilience. The County prioritized restoring safe access, supporting displaced residents, documenting damages for reimbursement, coordinating engineering studies, identifying mitigation projects, and maintaining continuous communication with affected residents. Recovery planning has emphasized rebuilding stronger and reducing future disaster risk wherever practical.

Ponderosa Village Recovery

Ponderosa Village has remained one of the County's highest recovery priorities. Residents expressed ongoing concerns regarding debris lodged against homes, blocked drainage channels, additional flooding potential, and continued threats to life and property.

To improve communications, the Emergency Operations Center designated the County Executive Assistant as the official point of contact for Ponderosa Village. Community meetings have been conducted to explain recovery operations, discuss mitigation projects, answer resident questions, and gather feedback for future planning.

Resident Assistance

Emergency Management has coordinated with Human Services and community partners to ensure impacted residents receive information regarding available recovery resources, sandbag distribution, flood preparedness, and disaster assistance. While several residents have asked whether the County could purchase impacted properties, no County buyout program currently exists. Staff continue monitoring future state and federal assistance opportunities.

Property Tax Relief Evaluation

The Ouray County Assessor has begun evaluating potential property tax relief options for properties directly impacted by the Gold Mountain Fire and subsequent debris flows. The review includes documentation of disaster-related damages and evaluation of applicable Colorado statutes. No final determinations have been made.

Community Engagement

Recovery has emphasized continuous engagement with affected residents through community meetings, coordination with engineering consultants, state recovery partners, watershed specialists, and elected officials. These meetings have informed project prioritization while maintaining transparency regarding recovery timelines and available assistance.

Continuing Recovery Challenges

Recovery remains complicated by watershed instability, recurring debris flow hazards, environmental permitting requirements, funding limitations, and the complexity of coordinating numerous local, state, and federal partners. Despite these challenges, the County continues to advance projects that improve resilience while supporting long-term recovery.



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Financial Recovery, Funding, and Long-Term Recovery Planning

Financial Recovery Strategy

Recovery from the Gold Mountain Fire and the subsequent debris flow events will require a sustained financial commitment extending well beyond the immediate response phase. Recognizing the magnitude of the incident, Ouray County began developing a comprehensive financial recovery strategy while response operations were still underway. This strategy focuses on maximizing reimbursement opportunities, pursuing available grant funding, establishing local funding mechanisms, and ensuring recovery projects can continue over the coming years.

County leadership has worked closely with Emergency Management, Finance, DHSEM, DOLA, and other state partners to identify eligible funding sources and establish documentation processes necessary to support reimbursement requests and future grant applications. Financial recovery has become a critical component of the County's overall recovery strategy.

Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG)

Throughout the incident, Emergency Management has worked closely with the Colorado Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) to document eligible expenditures associated with the Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG).

Recovery staff have coordinated personnel documentation, equipment usage records, resource ordering documentation, procurement records, mutual aid documentation, emergency protective measures, and cost tracking for eligible response activities. Accurate documentation remains essential to maximizing reimbursement opportunities and ensuring compliance with state and federal grant requirements.

Disaster Donations

Recognizing the generosity of the public and the need for transparent management of disaster-related donations, Ouray County finalized partnership agreements with the Telluride Foundation and the Western Colorado Community Foundation. These partnerships provide secure and accountable mechanisms for receiving and administering charitable donations that support community recovery and assistance to impacted residents.

Recovery Staffing

As recovery operations expanded, the County recognized the need for dedicated personnel to coordinate the increasing number of recovery projects, partner agencies, grant opportunities, and community outreach efforts. The County finalized the creation of the Response Manager position and will initiate recruitment following Board approval. This position will strengthen the County's ability to coordinate both current recovery activities and future disaster operations.



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Long-Term Disaster Funding

County leadership-initiated discussions with the Town of Ridgway and the City of Ouray regarding a proposed countywide ballot measure establishing a dedicated disaster funding source. The proposal would create a 0.5 percent countywide sales tax dedicated to disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation.

If approved by voters, the measure is projected to generate approximately \$1 million annually. The proposed distribution allocates 80 percent to Ouray County, 10 percent to the City of Ouray, and 10 percent to the Town of Ridgway. This represents a significant step toward establishing sustainable local funding for future disasters.

Property Tax Relief

The Ouray County Assessor has begun evaluating potential property tax relief options for properties directly impacted by the Gold Mountain Fire and subsequent debris flows. The evaluation includes documentation of qualifying damages, review of applicable Colorado statutes, coordination with County leadership, and assessment of potential adjustments consistent with state law. Although no formal decisions have been made, this effort reflects the County's commitment to reducing the financial burden on affected property owners whenever legally possible.

Pursuit of Additional Recovery Funding

County staff continue pursuing additional state and federal funding opportunities, including the Emergency Watershed Protection Program, potential U.S. Army Corps of Engineers assistance, NRCS funding opportunities, hazard mitigation grants, watershed restoration funding, and other disaster recovery programs as they become available.

Financial Outlook

Recovery from the Gold Mountain Fire represents a multi-year financial commitment. While considerable progress has been made establishing funding partnerships, identifying grant opportunities, and documenting eligible costs, substantial work remains. Continued collaboration among local governments, state agencies, federal partners, nonprofit organizations, and private stakeholders will be essential to restoring the community while reducing the long-term financial burden on Ouray County taxpayers.



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Recovery Accomplishments, Remaining Challenges, Current Priorities, and Future Outlook

Recovery Accomplishments

Since the Gold Mountain Fire was first reported on June 27, 2026, Ouray County has successfully transitioned from emergency response operations into an organized, coordinated long-term recovery effort. While significant work remains, substantial progress has been made in establishing the organizational structure, partnerships, funding mechanisms, engineering support, and recovery strategies necessary to guide recovery over the coming years.

One of the County's most significant accomplishments has been recognizing that recovery would become a long-term effort while wildfire response operations were still underway. Rather than waiting for fire suppression activities to conclude, the Emergency Operations Center began integrating recovery planning into daily incident management. This proactive approach allowed recovery efforts to begin immediately following the July 26 and July 29 debris flow events rather than starting after the disaster had already evolved.

Recovery leadership was formally established through the designation of Glenn Boyd, Emergency Manager, and Antonio Mendez, County Manager, as Recovery Leads. This structure has provided centralized coordination for recovery operations while maintaining continuity between response, recovery, mitigation, and future preparedness activities.

The County successfully established working relationships with numerous state and federal agencies including DHSEM, DOLA, DFPC, NRCS, CWCB, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the State Recovery Task Force. These partnerships significantly expanded the technical expertise and recovery resources available to Ouray County.

Execution of the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) agreement and selection of KLJ Engineering as the County's engineering consultant established the technical foundation necessary for watershed stabilization, debris removal, channel restoration, and long-term flood mitigation projects.

Emergency Management coordinated a DFPC Multi-Mission Aircraft mission to obtain high-resolution aerial imagery supporting engineering design and project prioritization. Coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers resulted in a scheduled August 10, 2026 field review of Dexter Creek and potentially Cutler Creek to evaluate recovery opportunities.

Recovery planning also expanded to include coordination with Jeff Luttrell regarding historic mine hazards within the burn scar. A technical team will assess abandoned mine features for wildfire- and debris-flow-related hazards.

Community recovery accomplishments include establishing a dedicated point of contact for Ponderosa Village, conducting community meetings, supporting engineering discussions with residents, establishing disaster donation partnerships with the Telluride Foundation and Western Colorado Community



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Foundation, documenting FMAG reimbursement activities, creating the Response Manager position, and initiating discussions regarding a countywide disaster funding ballot initiative.

Remaining Recovery Challenges

Although considerable progress has been made, recovery remains in its early stages. Burned watersheds continue to create the potential for additional flooding and debris flows during significant rainfall events. Engineering complexity, environmental permitting requirements, limited funding, and the need to coordinate multiple local, state, and federal agencies continue to present significant challenges. Balancing immediate protective actions with long-term watershed restoration remains a primary focus.

Current Recovery Priorities

Current recovery priorities include:

- Completing engineering design for Emergency Watershed Protection projects.
- Conducting field reviews with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- Continuing coordination with NRCS on watershed stabilization.
- Reviewing DFPC Multi-Mission Aircraft imagery.
- Identifying debris removal priorities.
- Advancing mitigation projects protecting Ponderosa Village and other high-risk areas.
- Evaluating historic mine hazards.
- Continuing documentation for reimbursement and grant opportunities.
- Maintaining communication with affected residents.
- Supporting long-term recovery planning across County departments.

Next Steps

Over the coming months, Ouray County will continue transitioning from recovery planning into project implementation. Priority activities include completion of engineering investigations, development of construction-ready watershed stabilization projects, submission of grant applications, continued coordination with partner agencies, expanded community outreach, identification of additional mitigation opportunities, continued financial documentation, and development of long-term watershed restoration strategies. Regular updates will continue to be provided to the Board of County Commissioners.

Conclusion

Recovery from the Gold Mountain Fire represents one of the largest and most complex recovery efforts ever undertaken by Ouray County. The incident fundamentally altered watersheds, damaged homes and infrastructure, changed stream channels, and created ongoing hazards that will require years of coordinated recovery and mitigation.

Despite these challenges, Ouray County has built a strong recovery program through early planning, strong partnerships, engineering coordination, community engagement, and proactive financial



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planning. While recovery is far from complete, the work accomplished to date positions the County to restore affected areas, strengthen community resilience, and better prepare for future disasters.

Long-Term Recovery Vision and Recommendations

Introduction

Although considerable progress has been made during the initial recovery phase following the Gold Mountain Fire and subsequent debris flow events, the recovery effort remains in its early stages. Recovery from a disaster of this magnitude cannot be measured in weeks or months. Instead, the County should anticipate a multi-year effort requiring sustained leadership, continued investment, strong partnerships, and strategic planning.

The recommendations contained within this report are intended to guide future recovery efforts while improving the County's resilience against future wildfire and post-fire flooding events.

Recommendation 1

Continue Recovery Coordination

The County should maintain an organized recovery structure until major recovery projects have been completed.

Although emergency response operations have largely concluded, recovery coordination remains critical. Continued collaboration among County departments, municipalities, state agencies, federal agencies, engineering consultants, and nonprofit organizations will ensure projects remain aligned and funding opportunities are fully utilized.

The Recovery Lead structure established during this incident should continue throughout implementation of recovery projects.

Recommendation 2

Continue Watershed Restoration

Watershed restoration should remain the County's highest recovery priority.

The July debris flows demonstrated the devastating impacts unstable watersheds can have on homes, transportation systems, utilities, and public safety.

Future efforts should continue focusing on:

- Channel stabilization
- Debris removal
- Sediment reduction



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- Erosion control
- Stream restoration
- Culvert improvements
- Flood conveyance improvements
- Long-term watershed monitoring
- Implementation of Emergency Watershed Protection projects should remain a priority.

Recommendation 3

Expanding Hazard Mitigation

Recovery provides an opportunity to reduce future disaster losses.

The County should continue identifying projects eligible for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), BRIC (or successor programs), Colorado Water Conservation Board funding, NRCS assistance, and other mitigation opportunities.

Potential mitigation priorities include:

- Debris basins
- Improved drainage systems
- Culvert replacement
- Flood diversion
- Early warning systems
- Additional stream monitoring
- Enhanced emergency communications
- Wildfire mitigation projects

Recommendation 4

Strengthening Community Resilience

Recovery should focus not only on rebuilding damaged areas but on creating a more resilient community.

Future planning should continue emphasizing:

- Public education
- Preparedness
- Defensible space
- Flood awareness
- Emergency alerting
- Community evacuation planning
- Volunteer coordination



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Building community resilience will reduce future disaster impacts while strengthening public confidence.

Recommendation 5

Maintaining State and Federal Partnerships

One of the greatest strengths demonstrated during this incident has been the partnership between Ouray County and numerous state and federal agencies.

These partnerships should continue throughout recovery, including coordination with:

- Colorado DHSEM
- Colorado DOLA
- Colorado Water Conservation Board
- DFPC
- NRCS
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- FEMA
- U.S. Forest Service
- Bureau of Land Management

Continued collaboration will maximize available technical expertise and funding opportunities.

Recommendation 6

Continuing Engineering Assessments

Engineering investigations should continue until permanent recovery projects have been designed.

Future work should include:

- Additional watershed analysis
- Hydrologic modeling
- Sediment transport analysis
- Channel design
- Bridge evaluations
- Culvert replacement planning
- Infrastructure vulnerability assessments

These studies will provide the foundation for future construction projects.



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Recommendation 7

Develop Sustainable Disaster Funding

The Gold Mountain Fire demonstrated that disaster recovery places significant financial demands on local government.

A proposed countywide disaster funding initiative represents an important opportunity to establish predictable local funding supporting:

- Emergency Management
- Disaster response
- Recovery
- Hazard mitigation
- Preparedness
- Grant matching requirements

Long-term financial sustainability will significantly improve the County's ability to respond to future disasters.

Recommendation 8

Continuing Community Engagement

Recovery succeeds only when residents remain informed and involved.

The County should continue:

- Community meetings
- Public updates
- Website improvements
- Social media outreach
- Stakeholder engagement
- Neighborhood coordination
- Individual resident assistance

Maintaining transparency throughout recovery will continue building public trust.

Closing Statement

The Gold Mountain Fire represents one of the most significant disasters in Ouray County's history. While the wildfire itself has largely concluded, the long-term impacts of burned watersheds, debris flows, damaged infrastructure, and altered landscapes will continue to affect the community for years.



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Throughout this incident, Ouray County has demonstrated exceptional leadership by recognizing that recovery begins during response, aggressively pursuing state and federal partnerships, establishing a formal recovery organization, and focusing on long-term resilience rather than simply restoring pre-disaster conditions.

The recovery effort remains ongoing. However, the foundation established during the initial months following the incident positions the County to successfully restore damaged watersheds, protect vulnerable communities, strengthen critical infrastructure, and emerge more resilient than before.

Continued collaboration among County departments, elected officials, residents, state agencies, federal partners, engineering consultants, and nonprofit organizations will ensure that the recovery from the Gold Mountain Fire becomes not only a restoration effort but an opportunity to build a safer and more resilient Ouray County for future generations.

Partner Agencies, Recovery Timeline, and Acknowledgements

Partner Agencies

Recovery from the Gold Mountain Fire has required a whole-community approach involving local governments, state agencies, federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, private consultants, utility providers, and community volunteers. No single organization possesses the resources necessary to manage an incident of this magnitude independently. The success of recovery efforts to date reflects the commitment of numerous partners working toward a common objective.

Local Government

- Ouray County Board of County Commissioners
- Ouray County Emergency Management
- Ouray County Sheriff's Office
- Ouray County Road & Bridge
- Ouray County Public Health
- Ouray County Human Services
- Ouray County GIS
- Ouray County Information Technology
- Ouray County Finance Department
- Ouray County Assessor's Office
- City of Ouray
- Town of Ridgway



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State Agencies

- Colorado Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM)
- Colorado Division of Local Affairs (DOLA)
- Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC)
- Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB)
- Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)
- Colorado Department of Agriculture
- State Recovery Task Force

Federal Agencies

- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Forest Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Engineering and Technical Partners

- KLJ Engineering
- DFPC Multi-Mission Aircraft Program
- Engineering consultants
- Watershed specialists
- Hydrologists
- Geotechnical engineers

Community and Nonprofit Partners

- Telluride Foundation
- Western Colorado Community Foundation
- Ouray County COAD/COVAD partners
- Ouray Women's Club
- Local volunteers
- Community organizations
- Faith-based organizations
- Private donors



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Major Recovery Milestones

June 2026

- Gold Mountain Fire begins.
- Recovery planning initiated while suppression operations continue.

July 2026

- Recovery Organization established.
- Glenn Boyd and Antonio Mendez designated Recovery Leads.
- Coordination begins with DHSEM and DOLA.
- State Recovery Task Force engaged.
- NRCS coordination initiated.
- Burn scar monitoring begins.

July 26

- First major debris flow event.
- Recovery priorities significantly expand.

July 29

- Second major debris flow event.
- Initial structural damage assessments completed.
- Watershed recovery planning accelerated.

Early August

- Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) agreement executed.
- KLJ Engineering selected as engineering consultant.
- DFPC Multi-Mission Aircraft requested.
- State Recovery Task Force deployed.
- Community meetings conducted.
- Ponderosa Village recovery coordination expanded.
- Donation partnerships finalized.
- Response Manager position created.

August 10

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers scheduled to conduct field review.
- Continued coordination with NRCS and engineering consultants.

Recovery Successes

During the initial recovery phase, Ouray County has successfully:



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- Established a formal recovery organization.
- Developed strong state and federal partnerships.
- Initiated watershed recovery planning.
- Begun engineering design.
- Pursued multiple funding opportunities.
- Improved communication with affected residents.
- Coordinated technical assessments.
- Integrated mitigation into recovery planning.
- Built a foundation for long-term recovery.

Acknowledgements

Recovery from the Gold Mountain Fire has required an extraordinary commitment from County employees, elected officials, emergency responders, partner agencies, engineering consultants, nonprofit organizations, volunteers, and residents.

County staff have continued supporting recovery while simultaneously maintaining essential government services and preparing for future emergencies. State and federal partners have provided invaluable technical expertise, financial guidance, and recovery resources. Engineering consultants have begun developing solutions that will improve long-term watershed resilience. Community organizations and private donors have provided critical support to residents affected by the disaster.

Perhaps most importantly, the residents of Ouray County have demonstrated remarkable patience, resilience, and cooperation throughout an incident that continues to evolve. Their willingness to participate in community meetings, provide valuable local knowledge, support one another, and remain engaged throughout recovery has significantly strengthened the County's ability to develop effective recovery strategies.

Final Statement

The Gold Mountain Fire and subsequent debris flow events represent a defining moment in the history of Ouray County. While the immediate emergency has passed, the work of recovery will continue for years. Through strong leadership, regional partnerships, sound engineering, proactive mitigation, and an unwavering commitment to serving the community, Ouray County has established a solid foundation for long-term recovery.

The County's goal is not simply to restore what was lost, but to emerge from this disaster stronger, safer, and more resilient than before. This report documents the significant progress made during the initial phase of recovery and provides a roadmap for the continued work that lies ahead. The Board of County Commissioners, County staff, partner agencies, and the community will continue working together to ensure that recovery efforts protect lives, strengthen infrastructure, restore natural resources, and preserve the quality of life that defines Ouray County.