

Elk Creek Fire Protection District

2026 Proposed Budget Narrative

The Elk Creek Fire Protection District Mission Statement:

To encourage and promote fire safety and fire prevention; to provide fire suppression and emergency medical services; and to make our mountain community a safe place to live, work and play.

Introduction

The 2026 Proposed Budget for the Elk Creek Fire Protection District (ECFPD) has been prepared in accordance with Colorado Title 32, Article 1, Special District Act, and the Local Government Budget Law of Colorado. The budget reflects the District's ongoing commitment to provide high-quality fire suppression, emergency medical services (EMS), wildland response, and community risk reduction within the resources available to the District.

The 2026 budget emphasizes maintaining core operational capacity while advancing investments in personnel, training, and capital improvements necessary to sustain service delivery in a growing and high-risk wildland-urban interface environment.

This budget represents the best estimate of expected revenues and anticipated costs for 2026. All projected revenues and expenditures are subject to change as more complete information is available.

In the end, the budget will be, even after adoption, an estimate of the revenue and expenditures for 2026. Actual income and costs will vary.

The budget is broken down into the areas where money is spent. The final numbers are easier to find and see what certain programs cost and how they impact the district.

Beginning Fund Balance

The District begins 2026 about **\$7,892,000** in available funds, a modest decrease from the 2025 beginning balance of **\$8,070,007**. This change reflects planned use of capital reserves during 2025 for the first lease payment on the two new fire engines on order.

Revenues

Total Revenue

Total 2026 revenues are projected at \$7,763,155, an increase of 3.1% compared to the 2025 estimate of \$7,533,076. Revenue growth is primarily driven by a modest increase in Jefferson County assessments, improved ambulance billing receipts and an increase in mitigation contract income, offset by expected reductions in wildfire reimbursement revenue.

Tax Revenue

- **Property Taxes:** Projected at \$4,771,573, an increase of 4 % over 2025 estimates, reflecting modest assessed valuation growth within the District's boundaries.
- **Specific Ownership Taxes:** Remain flat at \$275,000.
- **Delinquent Taxes:** No significant change, budgeted at (\$10,000).

Total tax revenue is projected to increase 3.9%, from \$4,847,220 to \$5,036,573.

Non-Tax Revenue

Non-tax revenues are budgeted at \$2,726,582, a slight 1.5% increase from 2025. Key changes include:

- **Net Ambulance Billings:** Increase from \$395,000 to \$500,000 (+26.6%). This increase reflects improved collection rates and call volume growth within the service area.
- **CRRF Wildfire Reimbursements:** Decrease from \$1,554,356 to \$1,461,582 (-6.0%). This reduction aligns with a conservative approach following several active wildfire seasons.
- **Mitigation Contracts:** Significant increase from \$50,000 to \$200,000 (+300%), due to planned expansion of fuels mitigation work under intergovernmental and grant-funded projects.
- **IGA Reimbursements:** Decrease from \$225,000 to \$96,000 (-57.3%), as Conifer Fire Protection District has chosen to remove some funding for programs.
- **Other Income:** Decline of **15.6%** from **\$32,000** to **\$27,000**, reflecting the surplus of a fire engine in 2025.

Transfers from Reserves

Transfers from reserves total \$782,000, an increase of 193% from 2025 (\$267,000). These transfers support capital expenditures for the purchase of 2 new ambulances and the lease payment for 2 new fire engines. This transfer was made for the total apparatus expense to show the magnitude of the purchase.

Expenditures

Total Expenditures

Total expenditures for 2026 are proposed at \$7,925,109, representing an increase of 2.8% from 2025's \$7,710,742. The District's spending plan maintains operational stability while addressing specific cost escalations in labor, capital leases, and prevention activities.

The following categories experienced changes greater than 25%:

Health & Wellness

Increases from \$55,388 to \$105,800 (+91%). This reflects enhanced wellness programming, including mental health resources, fitness stipends, and preventative medical screenings for staff.

Expenses – Fuels Crew

Decreases from **\$18,290** to **\$5,000** (**-72.7%**). This reduction is due to reclassification of seasonal costs into the mitigation contracts line and the changing or some of the ways the fuels crew operates.

Expenses – Leases/Capital

Increases from \$657,000 to \$782,000 (+19%, nearing the 25% threshold). The growth represents scheduled payments on new apparatus and facilities lease-purchase agreements.

Expenses – Prevention

Increases from \$24,518 to \$51,535 (+110%). The increase funds expanded community risk reduction programs, code enforcement, and public education efforts supported by the prevention division.

Prevention Labor

Increases from \$212,257 to \$310,906 (+46.5%). This increase supports the addition of a full-time Mitigation Specialist in an effort to bring the 12 month back log of assessments to a reasonable level.

Expenses – Wildland/Suppression

Decreases from \$137,240 to \$53,088 (–61.3%), reflecting reallocating some of the expenses as well as cost containment.

Training Expenses

Decreases from \$119,735 to \$92,000 (–23%, close to threshold). This minor reduction reflects a division of training expenses into specific areas instead of a large, blanket training budget.

All other expenditure categories remain within normal fluctuation ranges, reflecting modest inflationary increases in labor and operational costs across EMS, fire suppression, and administrative divisions.

Reserves

The District continues to maintain reserves in compliance with state fiscal responsibility standards:

- **TABOR Reserve:** Budgeted at \$232,895, equal to 3% of fiscal year revenue.
- **General Fund Carryover Reserve:** Maintained at \$500,000 to ensure operational continuity.
- **Board-Designated Reserve:** Continues at \$100,000, available for unforeseen emergencies.
- **Capital Reserve Fund:** Draws down from \$3,183,000 to \$2,401,000 (–24.6%), as planned capital purchases are completed and no transfers into the fund are budgeted for 2026.
- **Unrestricted Reserve Fund:** the total unrestricted reserves for the district are 4,496,493.
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Despite the drawdown, the District's total reserves remain strong at \$7,730,388.

Summary and Outlook

The 2026 Proposed Budget for the Elk Creek Fire Protection District reflects fiscal management and responsible investment in the District's personnel, equipment, and mission-critical programs.

While total expenditures rise modestly, the District maintains balanced operations, strategic use of reserves, and sustainable service delivery across all divisions.

Looking forward, ECFPD will continue to monitor property tax trends, personnel costs, and wildfire activity closely to ensure financial stability and operational readiness.

	<u>2024 Actual</u>	<u>2025 Estimated</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Beginning Available Funds	\$ 6,127,725	\$ 8,070,007	\$ 7,892,341
REVENUES			
	Tax Revenue		
Property Taxes	\$ 4,979,009	\$ 4,582,220	\$ 4,771,573
Specific Ownership Taxes	\$ 298,586	\$ 275,000	\$ 275,000
Delinquent Taxes	\$ (6,312)	\$ (10,000)	\$ (10,000)
	Total Tax	\$ 5,271,283	\$ 4,847,220
	Non-Tax Revenue		
Net Ambulance Billings	\$ 524,326	\$ 395,000	\$ 500,000
CRRF Wildfire Reimbursements	\$ 2,032,105	\$ 1,554,356	\$ 1,461,582
Grants	\$ 177,405	\$ -	\$ -
Interest Income	\$ 389,785	\$ 369,500	\$ 382,000
Lease Revenue	\$ 63,352	\$ 60,000	\$ 60,000
Mitigation Contracts	\$ 66,017	\$ 50,000	\$ 200,000
IGA Reimbursements	\$ 243,932	\$ 225,000	\$ 96,000
Other Income	\$ 46,188	\$ 32,000	\$ 27,000
	Total Non-Tax Revenue	\$ 3,543,111	\$ 2,685,856
	Total Revenue	\$ 8,814,393	\$ 7,533,076
	Transfer In from Reserves	\$ -	\$ 267,000
	Total Funds Available	\$ 14,942,118	\$ 15,870,083
EXPENDITURES			
Expenses-Administration	\$ 630,889	\$ 871,023	\$ 903,751
Health & Wellness	\$ 48,286	\$ 55,388	\$ 105,800
Admin Labor	\$ 588,153	\$ 563,039	\$ 570,016
Expenses-CRRF	\$ 149,414	\$ 190,725	\$ 160,538
CRRF Labor	\$ 1,321,710	\$ 935,763	\$ 963,756
Expenses-EMS	\$ 193,834	\$ 248,453	\$ 240,246
EMS Labor	\$ 977,819	\$ 1,106,661	\$ 1,131,234
Expenses-Fire	\$ 152,545	\$ 183,280	\$ 179,859
Fire Labor	\$ 645,949	\$ 734,668	\$ 744,249
Expensees-Fuels Crew	\$ 8,876	\$ 18,290	\$ 5,000
Fuels Labor	\$ 188,864	\$ 231,855	\$ 204,580
Expenses-Fire Stations	\$ 144,653	\$ 155,977	\$ 153,369
Expenses-Leases/Capital	\$ 287,278	\$ 657,000	\$ 782,000
Expenses-Maintenance	\$ 124,918	\$ 169,000	\$ 200,750
Maintenance Labor	\$ 213,160	\$ 231,426	\$ 239,532
Expenses-Prevention	\$ 4,242	\$ 24,518	\$ 51,535
Prevention Labor	\$ 201,685	\$ 212,257	\$ 310,906
Expenses-Training	\$ 82,224	\$ 119,735	\$ 92,000
Training Labor	\$ 174,326	\$ 193,540	\$ 189,505
Expenses-Wildland/Suppression	\$ 135,783	\$ 137,240	\$ 53,088
Wildland/Suppression Labor	\$ 597,505	\$ 670,906	\$ 643,395
	Total Expenditures	\$ 6,872,111	\$ 7,710,742
	Transfer Out to Reserves	\$ -	\$ -
	Total Expenditures & Transfers Out Requiring		
	Appropriation	\$ 6,872,111	\$ 7,710,742
	Ending Available Funds (beg bal + rev - exp)	\$ 8,070,007	\$ 7,892,341
RESERVES			
Tabor Reserves	\$ 264,432	\$ 225,992	\$ 232,895
General Fund (Carryover) Reserves	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000
Board Designated Reserves	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
	<i>Capital Reserve Fund Savings:</i>		
Opening Capital Reserve Fund	\$ 3,450,000	\$ 3,450,000	\$ 3,183,000
Transfer from Operating	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Transfer to Operating	\$ -	\$ (267,000)	\$ (782,000)
Ending Capital Reserve Fund	\$ 3,450,000	\$ 3,183,000	\$ 2,401,000
Net Unrestricted Reserves	\$ 3,755,576	\$ 3,883,349	\$ 4,496,493
	Total Reserves	\$ 8,070,007	\$ 7,892,341