LIVING WITH FIRE | Front Range, CO

A Resource List to Start Thinking About Fire in New Ways

For most of the last century, the goal was simple: stop every fire, fast. But our land evolved with fire and depends on it. A century of putting all of our efforts into keeping fire at bay has left forests dense and primed to burn hot. A growing movement of ecologists, fire crews, and Indigenous fire-keepers is asking a different question: not how do we keep fire out, but how do we live well with it. Here are a few places to start learning.

Start here

Good Fire (podcast)

Hosted conversations with Indigenous fire practitioners and cultural firekeepers who treat fire as a relative and a tool for healing, not just a hazard. It reframes “good fire” versus “bad fire” and shows what putting fire back on the land actually looks like: the planning, ceremony, and community work that happens long before a flame is set.

Boulder, Denver & the Front Range

- **Wildfire Partners (Boulder County)** | a wonderful resource for home assessments and community mitigation in Boulder County
- **The Ember Alliance** | Front Range nonprofit restoring the relationship between communities and fire
- **Northern Colorado Fireshed Collaborative** | agencies, tribes, and nonprofits coordinating fire work along the northern Front Range
- **Colorado State Forest Service: Live Wildfire Ready** | all-purpose guide to defensible space, the Home Ignition Zone guide, and how to assess your own fire risk anywhere in CO

Acknowledging This Land

Both Denver and Boulder sit on the ancestral homelands of the Hinóno’eitíít (Arapaho), Tsétsėhéstâhese (Cheyenne), and Núuchiu (Ute) peoples, who used fire to tend these grasslands and foothills for centuries. Denver sits at the confluence of the South Platte River and Cherry Creek which was a gathering and trading place for more than forty-five Indigenous nations. After the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre, Arapaho and Cheyenne survivors were forced out of Colorado, so local fire traditions were severed here from this land. The groups below are vital to rebuilding that relationship.

- **Right Relationship Boulder** | reconnecting Boulder County to its indigenous neighbors
- **Denver Indian Center** | longstanding community hub serving the Denver metro Native community

Read: **CU Boulder Land Acknowledgment** | a really succinct explanation of the value of a land acknowledgment

National Cultural & Indigenous Fire Resources

- **Indigenous Peoples Burning Network** | Native-led network revitalizing traditional fire practices across the U.S.
- **NPS: Indigenous Fire Practices Shape Our Land** | a good introduction to cultural burning and its vitality for our land
- **Cultural Burning & TEK (Fire Adapted Communities Network)** | article on learning from Indigenous fire knowledge without exploiting it
- **Indigenous-Led Burns Return to California (The Nature Conservancy)** | what a modern cultural burn looks like, in story form, with the Yurok tribe in California

Go deeper | films & books

- **Elemental (documentary, Trip Jennings)** | incredible film that looks at fire through multiple lenses: fire survivors, scientists, and Indigenous voices reimagining how we live with fire
- **The Pyrocene — Stephen Pyne** | the big-picture argument that we've entered a human-made age of fire
- **Tending the Wild — M. Kat Anderson** | how Indigenous people actively shaped the land with fire and care
- **Fire Country — Victor Steffensen** | an Aboriginal firekeeper on reading land and burning the right way
- **Wilder Than Wild (documentary)** | fuel build-up, climate, and Indigenous burning, a clear hour-long primer

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