

2SHB 1578 - S COMM AMD

By Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert the
2 following:

3 "NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature recognizes that, just
4 as the forests on the east side of the state are being impacted by
5 climate change, western Washington forests, too, are seeing
6 increasing vulnerabilities to forest health and resilience. The
7 frequency and severity of wildfires, resulting smoke incursions, and
8 postfire flash floods and debris flow in areas of increasing
9 population density are expected to intensify in the years to come,
10 fueled by drought, pests, and disease, and increasing temperatures.

11 (2) The legislature recognizes that communities within the
12 wildland urban interface and in areas of high or growing population
13 density are increasingly experiencing more frequent and severe
14 wildfires, resulting smoke exposure, flash floods, and debris flow,
15 and that this intensifies health and safety hazards for residents,
16 infrastructure, and ecosystems.

17 (3) The legislature finds that lives, health, and infrastructure
18 are endangered by unplanned wildland fires, associated smoke
19 exposure, and postwildfire debris flow hazards in Washington state.
20 Wildland fires come with cascading and multihazard impacts on air
21 quality and the health of our residents. Therefore, investing in
22 wildland fire community preparedness, recovery, and resilience
23 provides important cobenefits that will improve the health and safety
24 of residents, infrastructure, and ecosystems in forested and
25 nonforested areas and will reduce the economic burden on local
26 governments, organizations, communities, and the state.

27 (4) The legislature acknowledges that public health and emergency
28 management preparedness aligns with the state's environmental justice
29 goals, where programming and interventions support vulnerable
30 populations and those living in regions experiencing

1 disproportionately high levels of wildfire, air pollutants, and smoke
2 exposure.

3 (5) The legislature recognizes that there is a need for a
4 comprehensive approach to public safety and health related to
5 evacuation planning, emergency response and stabilization, creating
6 resilience to wildfire smoke, and postfire landslide hazard
7 identification and mitigation. A key priority during a wildfire
8 response is engaging relevant evacuation and emergency response
9 plans. A key priority in wildfire recovery is emergency stabilization
10 to prevent increased damage to life, infrastructure, or natural
11 resources, and longer-term stabilization and rehabilitation efforts
12 may need to be continued for several years following a wildfire to
13 prevent unacceptable and dangerous land and water degradation.

14 (6) The legislature recognizes that while smoke from wildland
15 fires can affect individuals differently based on a multitude of
16 different factors, the negative health effects of poor air quality
17 are well established. A study led by the office of financial
18 management and the department of ecology found that when air quality
19 is categorized as "unhealthy," as compared to "good," due to wildfire
20 smoke, there is a 24 percent increase in medical service claims
21 related to asthma and a 12 percent increase in emergency department
22 visits.

23 (7) The legislature finds that cross-agency emergency management
24 planning and response that addresses wildland fires and related smoke
25 is important to the health and safety of the residents of Washington.
26 It is critical to provide timely smoke impact and forecast
27 information and messaging to the public that is accessible and based
28 on the best available science.

29 (8) The legislature recognizes that having clean and properly
30 ventilated indoor air is important to protect the health of all
31 residents. Those who experience acute or chronic health challenges
32 are at greater risk of the effects of hazardous or polluted air.
33 During wildfire events that lead to increased smoke in the ambient
34 air, public health officials often recommend staying indoors and
35 closing doors and windows. However, particularly on the western side
36 of the state, many homes do not have air conditioning systems.
37 Compared to nearly all other states, Washington homes have some of
38 the fewest air conditioning systems. Accordingly, during the warmest
39 days of summer, when wildfire events are most common, doors and

1 windows are opened for ventilation purposes, which inadvertently
2 allows smoke to enter the home and degrade indoor air quality.

3 (9) The legislature recognizes the work that the department of
4 natural resources has done to implement RCW 76.04.505, and that,
5 based on a robust prioritization process, the department of natural
6 resources has focused a majority of its efforts to date on wildfire
7 prevention and preparedness on the east side of the state.

8 (10) The legislature acknowledges that the department of natural
9 resources' community resilience programming for community-level and
10 property-level wildfire readiness has been successfully implemented
11 in numerous counties throughout eastern Washington and that
12 broadening the program statewide and incorporating smoke readiness
13 programming will benefit communities, residents, and local
14 governments facing growing wildfire-related risks.

15 (11) Therefore, the legislature finds that, given the increasing
16 impacts on the rapidly growing wildland urban interface and in areas
17 of increasing population density, the department of natural resources
18 must now also accelerate efforts to address the threats facing them.
19 This includes, but is not limited to, improving community
20 preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience related to wildland
21 fire, smoke, and postfire flash floods and debris flow.

22 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 76.04
23 RCW to read as follows:

24 (1)(a) The department must assess areas at significant risk for
25 wildfire, by decade, for a period encompassing not less than 30
26 years. The assessment must include an analysis of the predicted
27 climate influence on wildfire risk in the state and provide enough
28 detail for landowners, the public, local governments, and tribal
29 nations to develop strategies to address wildfire risk. The
30 department must provide the first risk assessment to the appropriate
31 committees of the legislature by July 1, 2027, covering a risk
32 assessment period of July 1, 2027, through June 30, 2037. A
33 subsequent decadal assessment is due to the appropriate committees of
34 the legislature every 10 years thereafter. The department must also
35 provide a mid-decade interim report to the appropriate committees of
36 the legislature by July 1, 2032, and every 10 years thereafter.

37 (b) Within existing resources, the department must coordinate
38 with counties on an update to wildland urban interface maps
39 consistent with RCW 43.30.580.

1 (2) Within existing resources, the department, in consultation
2 with the Washington military department emergency management division
3 and the Washington state patrol, must cooperate with law enforcement,
4 Indian tribes, emergency managers at the city and county level, and
5 local fire protection districts to develop public safety evacuation
6 strategies for areas identified in the respective decadal assessments
7 as facing significant risk of wildfire. The department must provide
8 support to help incorporate wildfire evacuation strategies within
9 existing regional and local emergency response plans. Implementation
10 of evacuation strategies remains under the authority of local law
11 enforcement.

12 (3) Within existing resources, the department must lead a project
13 to provide emergency disaster and evacuation plan messaging and
14 information to the public at department-managed recreation and
15 outdoor access sites. Information must be displayed in an accessible
16 manner, including in signage at trailheads, and be relevant to the
17 area's particular natural disaster risk profile. The department must
18 place particular emphasis on ensuring accessibility and accommodation
19 needs of public visitors are reflected in planning, design, and
20 information dissemination.

21 (4) Further, the department shall:

22 (a) Expand its community resilience and preparedness programming,
23 for community-level and property-level wildfire readiness, and the
24 associated supporting programs such as community resilience grants
25 and service forestry, within the wildland urban interface in counties
26 or regions of western Washington where risk of wildfires and smoke
27 exposure exist as determined by the department;

28 (b) Participate in cross-agency emergency management planning and
29 response efforts related to wildfire smoke plans developed under
30 chapter 38.52 RCW. The department shall incorporate smoke readiness
31 into community resilience programming and coordinate with state,
32 county, federal agencies, and Indian tribes to collaboratively share
33 information and guidance for Washington communities affected by
34 wildfire smoke. This includes providing updated wildfire information
35 to air quality and health agencies and to the public through online
36 information sources.

37 (i) The department shall coordinate cross-agency and shall
38 provide information to assess wildland fire smoke risks and impacts.
39 Activities may include:

1 (A) Coordinating with the department of ecology, local clean air
2 agencies, and the United States forest service to deploy temporary
3 air monitors to assess smoke conditions during wildfires;

4 (B) Providing information to the department of ecology to
5 continue to improve smoke modeling and forecasting tools and support
6 regulatory compliance;

7 (C) Advancing science and conducting research on wildfire smoke
8 event recurrence geographically, based on different forest types and
9 incorporating this research into planning efforts; and

10 (D) Information dissemination to the public through online
11 information sources.

12 (ii) The provisions of this section may not impact or prevent the
13 implementation of prescribed burns to improve forest health and
14 resiliency and reduce wildfire risks.

15 (iii) The department shall work cross-agency to address smoke
16 risk to transportation safety and firefighter exposure to smoke.

17 (iv) The department, in collaboration with the departments of
18 health and ecology, shall conduct community engagement and outreach
19 related to wildfire smoke risks and impacts, particularly in regions
20 of the state that experience disproportionately high levels of air
21 contaminants and pollutants. Particular emphasis in outreach will be
22 focused on overburdened populations, and vulnerable people, including
23 outdoor workers, those older in age, those experiencing persistent
24 health challenges, and those experiencing unstable housing
25 arrangements;

26 (c) Leverage community resilience programming to ensure residents
27 and community organizations are provided information about services
28 and programs to improve indoor air quality in the home. This may
29 include connecting residents with their local contracted
30 weatherization agency, which may provide home weatherization services
31 to eligible applicants and residents. Weatherization upgrades may
32 save energy, reduce utility costs, and improve indoor air quality;

33 (d) Within existing resources, by July 1, 2028, implement a
34 postwildfire debris flow program. The department shall identify areas
35 prone to hazards from postwildfire debris flows, assess burned areas
36 to determine potential for increases in postwildfire debris flow
37 hazards, improve modeling to determine triggers for postwildfire
38 debris flow early warning for at-risk communities and infrastructure,
39 and communicate to emergency managers, local governments,

1 stakeholders, state agencies, and the public both for preparedness
2 and response; and

3 (e) By December 30, 2027, have established a structure for a
4 state sponsored burned area emergency stabilization and response team
5 and make recommendations regarding the appropriate number of teams
6 needed, the funding necessary to support team deployments, and the
7 implementation of hazard mitigation. The department shall provide
8 capacity-building to local communities to establish local teams. The
9 purpose of the burned area emergency stabilization and response team
10 is to determine the need for emergency postfire treatments for public
11 safety and resource protection. The department must consult with
12 emergency managers, the military department, and the Washington
13 conservation commission when developing the organizational structure
14 of the teams established in this section.

15 (5) The department, when acting in good faith in its
16 implementation of this section, is carrying out duties owed to the
17 public in general and not to any individual person or class of
18 persons separate and apart from the public. Nothing contained in this
19 section may be construed to evidence a legislative intent that the
20 work of preparing for, responding to, or recovering from wildfire,
21 smoke incursions, or postfire landslides is owed to any individual
22 person or class of persons separate and apart from the public in
23 general. This section does not alter the department's duties and
24 responsibilities as a landowner.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** This act may be known and cited as the
26 cascading impacts of wildfires act."

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27 On page 1, line 4 of the title, after "interface;" strike the
28 remainder of the title and insert "adding a new section to chapter
29 76.04 RCW; and creating new sections."

EFFECT: Delays implementation of decadal wildfire risk
assessments from July 2025 to July 2027. Directs the department of
natural resources (DNR) to update wildland urban interface maps in
coordination with counties within existing resources. Adds that
additional air monitoring and other wildfire smoke research is not

intended to impact or prevent the implementation of prescribed burns to improve forest health and resiliency and reduce wildfire risks. Removes provisions directing DNR to work with stakeholders to identify smoke respite areas and cooling centers. Delays implementation of the postwildfire debris program from July 2024 to July 2028 and directs the DNR to implement the program within existing resources. Delays implementation of the burned area emergency stabilization and response teams from December 2024 to December 2027. Removes a null and void clause.

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