

**Chapter 76.04 RCW
FOREST PROTECTION**

Sections

ADMINISTRATION

- 76.04.005 Definitions.
- 76.04.015 Fire protection powers and duties of department—
Enforcement—Investigation—Administration.
- 76.04.016 Fire prevention and suppression capacity—Duties owed to
public in general—Legislative intent.
- 76.04.021 Department must accommodate livestock owner's request to
retrieve or care for animals at risk due to a wildfire—
Liability.
- 76.04.025 Federal funds.
- 76.04.035 Wardens—Appointment—Duties.
- 76.04.045 Rangers—Appointment—Ex officio rangers—Compensation.
- 76.04.055 Service of notices.
- 76.04.065 Arrests without warrants.
- 76.04.075 Rules—Penalty.
- 76.04.085 Penalty for violations.
- 76.04.095 Cooperative protection.
- 76.04.105 Contracts for protection and development.
- 76.04.115 Articles of incorporation—Requirements.
- 76.04.125 Requisites of contract.
- 76.04.135 Cooperative agreements—Public agencies—Transfer of
ownership of department-owned firefighting vehicle,
procedure.
- 76.04.155 Firefighting—Employment—Assistance.
- 76.04.165 Legislative declaration—Forest protection zones.
- 76.04.167 Legislative declaration—Equitable sharing of forest fire
protection costs—Coordinated forest fire protection and
suppression.
- 76.04.175 Fire suppression equipment—Comparison of costs.
- 76.04.177 Fire suppression equipment—Requirement to utilize private
equipment.
- 76.04.179 Wildland fire advisory committee.
- 76.04.181 Maximizing the utilization of local fire suppression
assets—Department's duty.
- 76.04.183 Prescribed burn manager certification program—Rule-making
authority.
- 76.04.185 Electric utility wildfire mitigation plan.
- 76.04.187 Wildfire risk assessment—Public safety evacuation
strategies—Emergency disaster and evacuation plan
messaging—Other departmental duties.
- 76.04.192 Aviation usage by local fire departments—Report to the
legislature.
- 76.04.194 Aerial fire response—Use of suppression funding.
- 76.04.196 Prescribed fire claims fund pilot program—Prescribed fire
claims account.

PERMITS

- 76.04.205 Burning permits—Civil penalty.
- 76.04.215 Burning mill wood waste—Arresters.

76.04.235 Dumping mill waste, forest debris—Penalty.
76.04.246 Use of blasting fuse.

CLOSURES/SUSPENSIONS

76.04.305 Closed to entry—Designation.
76.04.315 Suspension of burning permits/privileges.
76.04.325 Closure of forest operations or forestlands.

FIRE PROTECTION REGULATION

76.04.405 Steam, internal combustion, or electrical engines and other spark-emitting equipment regulated.
76.04.415 Penalty for violations—Work stoppage notice.
76.04.425 Unauthorized entry into sealed fire tool box.
76.04.435 Deposit of fire or live coals.
76.04.445 Reports of fire.
76.04.455 Discarding lighted material or smoking flammable material
—Discharge, release, or detonation of certain materials
—Receptacles in conveyances—Posting a copy of this section.
76.04.465 Certain snags to be felled currently with logging.
76.04.475 Reimbursement for costs of suppression action.
76.04.486 Escaped slash burns—Obligations.
76.04.495 Negligent starting of fires or allowance of extreme fire hazard or debris—Liability—Recovery of reasonable expenses—Lien.

WILDFIRE RESPONSE, FOREST RESTORATION, AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

76.04.505 Finding—Intent.
76.04.511 Wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account.
76.04.516 Report to the governor and legislature—Forest inventory—Forest growth and yield modeling—Sustainable harvest calculation—Review—Report.
76.04.521 Forest sector workforce development.
76.04.525 Wildland fire aviation support plan.

ASSESSMENTS, OBLIGATIONS, FUNDS

76.04.600 Owners to protect forests.
76.04.610 Forest fire protection assessment.
76.04.620 State funds—Loans—Recovery of funds from the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account.
76.04.630 Landowner contingency forest fire suppression account—Expenditures—Assessments.

HAZARD ABATEMENT

76.04.650 Disposal of forest debris—Permission to allow trees to fall on another's land.
76.04.660 Additional fire hazards—Extreme fire hazard areas—Abatement, isolation or reduction—Summary action—Recovery of costs—Inspection of property.

FIRE REGULATION

76.04.700 Failure to extinguish campfire.
76.04.710 Wilful setting of fire.
76.04.720 Removal of notices.
76.04.730 Negligent fire—Spread.

76.04.740 Reckless burning.
76.04.750 Uncontrolled fire a public nuisance—Suppression—Duties—
Summary action—Recovery of costs.
76.04.760 Civil actions—Forested lands—Fire damage.
76.04.770 Authorization to enter privately or publicly owned land to
extinguish or control a wildland fire—Limitation of
liability.
76.04.780 Utility wildland fire prevention advisory committee—
Duties—Report—Membership—Immunity.
76.04.900 Captions—1986 c 100.

Burning permits within fire protection districts: RCW 52.12.101.

Excessive steam in boilers, penalty: RCW 70.54.080.

*Steam boilers and pressure vessels, construction, installation,
inspection, and certification: Chapter 70.79 RCW.*

Treble damages for removal of trees: RCW 64.12.030 and 79.02.320.

ADMINISTRATION

RCW 76.04.005 Definitions. As used in this chapter, the following terms have the meanings indicated unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Additional fire hazard" means a condition existing on any land in the state:

(a) Covered wholly or in part by forest debris which is likely to further the spread of fire and thereby endanger life or property; or

(b) When, due to the effects of disturbance agents, broken, down, dead, or dying trees exist on forestland in sufficient quantity to be likely to further the spread of fire within areas covered by a forest health hazard warning or order issued by the commissioner of public lands under RCW 76.06.180. The term "additional fire hazard" does not include green trees or snags left standing in upland or riparian areas under the provisions of RCW 76.04.465 or chapter 76.09 RCW.

(2) "Closed season" means the period between April 15th and October 15th, unless the department designates different dates because of prevailing fire weather conditions.

(3) "Commissioner" means the commissioner of public lands.

(4) "Department" means the department of natural resources, or its authorized representatives, as defined in chapter 43.30 RCW.

(5) "Department protected lands" means all lands subject to the forest protection assessment under RCW 76.04.610 or covered under contract or agreement pursuant to RCW 76.04.135 by the department.

(6) "Disturbance agent" means those forces that damage or kill significant numbers of forest trees, such as insects, diseases, windstorms, ice storms, and fires.

(7) "Emergency fire costs" means those costs incurred or approved by the department for emergency forest fire suppression, including the employment of personnel, rental of equipment, and purchase of supplies over and above costs regularly budgeted and provided for nonemergency fire expenses for the biennium in which the costs occur.

(8) "Exploding target" means a device that is designed or marketed to ignite or explode when struck by firearm ammunition or other projectiles.

(9) "Forest debris" includes forest slash, chips, and any other vegetative residue resulting from activities on forestland.

(10) "Forest fire service" includes all wardens, rangers, and other persons employed especially for preventing or fighting forest fires.

(11) "Forestland" means any unimproved lands which have enough trees, standing or down, or flammable material, to constitute in the judgment of the department, a fire menace to life or property. Sagebrush and grass areas east of the summit of the Cascade mountains may be considered forestlands when such areas are adjacent to or intermingled with areas supporting tree growth. Forestland, for protection purposes, does not include structures.

(12) "Forestland owner," "owner of forestland," "landowner," or "owner" means the owner or the person in possession of any public or private forestland.

(13) "Forest material" means forest slash, chips, timber, standing or down, or other vegetation.

(14) "Incendiary ammunition" means ammunition that is designed to ignite or explode upon impact with or penetration of a target or designed to trace its course in the air with a trail of smoke, chemical incandescence, or fire.

(15) "Landowner operation" means every activity, and supporting activities, of a forestland owner and the landowner's agents, employees, or independent contractors or permittees in the management and use of forestland subject to the forest protection assessment under RCW 76.04.610 for the primary benefit of the owner. The term includes, but is not limited to, the growing and harvesting of forest products, the development of transportation systems, the utilization of minerals or other natural resources, and the clearing of land. The term does not include recreational and/or residential activities not associated with these enumerated activities.

(16) "Local fire suppression assets" means firefighting equipment that is located in close proximity to the wildland fire and that meets department standards and requirements.

(17) "Local wildland fire liaison" means the person appointed by the commissioner to serve as the local wildland fire liaison as provided in RCW 43.30.111.

(18) "Participating landowner" means an owner of forestland whose land is subject to the forest protection assessment under RCW 76.04.610.

(19) "Sky lantern" means an unmanned self-contained luminary device that uses heated air produced by an open flame or produced by another source to become or remain airborne.

(20) "Slash" means organic forest debris such as tree tops, limbs, brush, and other dead flammable material remaining on forestland as a result of a landowner operation.

(21) "Slash burning" means the planned and controlled burning of forest debris on forestlands by broadcast burning, underburning, pile burning, or other means, for the purposes of silviculture, hazard abatement, or reduction and prevention or elimination of a fire hazard.

(22) "Suppression" means all activities involved in the containment and control of forest fires, including the patrolling

thereof until such fires are extinguished or considered by the department to pose no further threat to life or property.

(23) "Unimproved lands" means those lands that will support grass, brush and tree growth, or other flammable material when such lands are not cleared or cultivated and, in the opinion of the department, are a fire menace to life and property. [2015 c 182 s 7. Prior: 2014 c 90 s 1; 2007 c 480 s 12; 1992 c 52 s 24; 1986 c 100 s 1.]

Reviser's note: The definitions in this section have been alphabetized pursuant to RCW 1.08.015(2)(k).

RCW 76.04.015 Fire protection powers and duties of department—Enforcement—Investigation—Administration. (1) The department may, at its discretion, appoint trained personnel possessing the necessary qualifications to carry out the duties and supporting functions of the department and may determine their respective salaries.

(2) The department shall have direct charge of and supervision of all matters pertaining to the forest fire service of the state.

(3) The department shall:

(a) Enforce all laws within this chapter;

(b) Be empowered to take charge of and, consistent with RCW 76.04.021, direct the work of suppressing forest fires;

(c)(i) Investigate the origin and cause of all forest fires to determine whether either a criminal act or negligence by any person, firm, or corporation caused the starting, spreading, or existence of the fire. In conducting investigations, the department shall work cooperatively, to the extent possible, with utilities, property owners, and other interested parties to identify and preserve evidence. Except as provided otherwise in this subsection, the department in conducting investigations is authorized, without court order, to take possession or control of relevant evidence found in plain view and belonging to any person, firm, or corporation. To the extent possible, the department shall notify the person, firm, or corporation of its intent to take possession or control of the evidence. The person, firm, or corporation shall be afforded reasonable opportunity to view the evidence and, before the department takes possession or control of the evidence, also shall be afforded reasonable opportunity to examine, document, and photograph it. If the person, firm, or corporation objects in writing to the department's taking possession or control of the evidence, the department must either return the evidence within seven days after the day on which the department is provided with the written objections or obtain a court order authorizing the continued possession or control.

(ii) Absent a court order authorizing otherwise, the department may not take possession or control of evidence over the objection of the owner of the evidence if the evidence is used by the owner in conducting a business or in providing an electric utility service and the department's taking possession or control of the evidence would substantially and materially interfere with the operation of the business or provision of electric utility service.

(iii) Absent a court order authorizing otherwise, the department may not take possession or control of evidence over the objection of an electric utility when the evidence is not owned by the utility but has caused damage to property owned by the utility. However, this subsection (3)(c)(iii) does not apply if the department has notified

the utility of its intent to take possession or control of the evidence and provided the utility with reasonable time to examine, document, and photograph the evidence.

(iv) Only personnel qualified to work on electrical equipment may take possession or control of evidence owned or controlled by an electric utility;

(d) Furnish notices or information to the public calling attention to forest fire dangers and the penalties for violation of this chapter;

(e) Be familiar with all timbered and cut-over areas of the state, areas where forest health treatments were undertaken on state, federal, or private land, public general transportation roads and public and private logging roads, water bodies, and other features on the landscape relevant in planning a fire response and include those features on a geographic information system for use by fire response personnel to assist in response decision making;

(f) Maximize the effective utilization of local fire suppression assets consistent with RCW 76.04.181; and

(g) Regulate and control the official actions of its employees, the wardens, and the rangers.

(4) The department may:

(a) Authorize all needful and proper expenditures for forest protection;

(b) Adopt rules consistent with this section for the prevention, control, and suppression of forest fires as it considers necessary including but not limited to: Fire equipment and materials; use of personnel; and fire prevention standards and operating conditions including a provision for reducing these conditions where justified by local factors such as location and weather;

(c) Remove at will the commission of any ranger or suspend the authority of any warden;

(d) Inquire into:

(i) The extent, kind, value, and condition of all timberlands within the state;

(ii) The extent to which timberlands are being destroyed by fire and the damage thereon;

(e) Provide fire detection, prevention, presuppression, or suppression services on nonforested public lands managed by the department or another state agency, but only to the extent that providing these services does not interfere with or detract from the obligations set forth in subsection (3) of this section. If the department provides fire detection, prevention, presuppression, or suppression services on nonforested public lands managed by another state agency, the department must be fully reimbursed for the work through a cooperative agreement as provided for in RCW 76.04.135(1).

(5) Any rules adopted under this section for the suppression of forest fires must include a mechanism by which a local fire mobilization radio frequency, consistent with RCW 43.43.963, is identified and made available during the initial response to any forest fire that crosses jurisdictional lines so that all responders have access to communications during the response. Different initial response frequencies may be identified and used as appropriate in different geographic response areas. If the fire radio communication needs escalate beyond the capability of the identified local radio frequency, the use of other available designated interoperability radio frequencies may be used.

(6) When the department considers it to be in the best interest of the state, it may cooperate with any agency of another state, the United States or any agency thereof, the Dominion of Canada or any agency or province thereof, and any county, town, corporation, individual, or Indian tribe within the state of Washington in forest firefighting and patrol. [2019 c 305 s 2; 2016 c 109 s 1; 2015 c 182 s 5; 2012 c 38 s 1; 2010 c 38 s 1; 1993 c 196 s 3; 1986 c 100 s 2.]

RCW 76.04.016 Fire prevention and suppression capacity—Duties owed to public in general—Legislative intent. The department when acting, in good faith, in its statutory capacity as a fire prevention and suppression agency, is carrying out duties owed to the public in general and not to any individual person or class of persons separate and apart from the public. Nothing contained in this title, including but not limited to any provision dealing with payment or collection of forest protection or fire suppression assessments, may be construed to evidence a legislative intent that the duty to prevent and suppress forest fires is owed to any individual person or class of persons separate and apart from the public in general. This section does not alter the department's duties and responsibilities as a landowner. [1993 c 196 s 1.]

RCW 76.04.021 Department must accommodate livestock owner's request to retrieve or care for animals at risk due to a wildfire—Liability. (1)(a) The department must make every reasonable effort to accommodate a livestock owner's request to retrieve or care for animals in his or her charge that are at risk due to a wildfire.

(b) The department may only prohibit livestock owners, or the owner's employees or agents, from retrieving or caring for livestock that are lawfully present on the public lands during any fire suppression response if doing so is reasonably necessary to prevent interference with a direct, active fire response.

(2) The department must incorporate the implementation of this section into any prefire season training or coordination conducted in local communities that contain active grazing areas.

(3)(a) The owner of livestock lawfully present on public lands assumes full liability for any damages incurred to himself or herself, and any employees or agents in his or her charge, if public lands are accessed to retrieve or care for livestock during the time of a fire suppression response by the department affecting the public lands in question.

(b) No civil liability may be imposed by any court on the state, the department, or another political subdivision of the state for any direct or indirect adverse impacts, including injury or death, resulting from:

(i) The department's reasonable efforts under this section to accommodate a livestock owner, or the owner's employees or agents, to retrieve or care for animals in his or her charge that are at risk due to a wildfire; or

(ii) A livestock owner, or the owner's employees or agents, accessing public lands to retrieve or care for livestock during the time of a fire suppression response by the department affecting the public lands in question. [2016 c 109 s 2.]

RCW 76.04.025 Federal funds. The department shall receive and disburse any and all moneys contributed, allotted, or paid by the United States under the authority of any act of Congress for use in cooperation with the state of Washington in protecting and developing forests. [1986 c 100 s 3.]

RCW 76.04.035 Wardens—Appointment—Duties. (1) The department may appoint any of its employees as wardens, at the times and localities as it considers the public welfare demands, within any area of the state where there is forestland requiring protection.

(2) The duties of wardens shall be:

(a) To provide forest fire prevention and protection information to the public;

(b) To investigate discovered or reported fires on forestlands and take appropriate action;

(c) To patrol their areas as necessary;

(d) To visit all parts of their area, and frequented places and camps as far as possible, and warn campers or other users and visitors of fire hazards;

(e) To see that all locomotives and all steam, internal combustion, and other spark-emitting equipment are provided with spark arresters and adequate devices for preventing the escape of fire or sparks in accordance with the law;

(f) To see that operations or activities on forestland have all required fire prevention and suppression equipment or devices as required by law;

(g) To extinguish wildfires;

(h) To set back-fires to control fires;

(i) To summons, impress, and employ help in controlling wildfires;

(j) To see that all laws for the protection of forests are enforced;

(k) To investigate, arrest, and initiate prosecution of all offenders of this chapter or other chapters as allowed by law; and

(l) To perform all other duties as prescribed by law and as the department directs.

(3) All wardens and rangers shall render reports to the department on blanks or forms, or in the manner and at the times as may be ordered, giving a summary of how employed, the area visited, expenses incurred, and other information as required by the department.

(4) The department may suspend the authority of any warden who may be incompetent or unwilling to discharge properly the duties of the office.

(5) The department shall determine the placement of the wardens and, upon its request to the county commissioners of any county, the county commissioners shall designate and furnish the wardens with suitably equipped office quarters in the county courthouse.

(6) The authority of the wardens regarding the prevention, suppression, and control of forest fires, summoning, impressing, or employing help, or making arrests for violations of this chapter may extend to any part of the state. [1986 c 100 s 4.]

RCW 76.04.045 Rangers—Appointment—Ex officio rangers—

Compensation. (1) All Washington state patrol officers, fish and wildlife officers, deputy state fire marshals, and state park rangers, while in their respective jurisdictions, shall be ex officio rangers.

(2) Employees of the United States forest service, when recommended by their forest supervisor, and citizens of the state advantageously located may, at the discretion of the department, be commissioned as rangers and vested with the certain powers and duties of wardens as specified in this chapter and as directed by the department.

(3) Rangers shall receive no compensation for their services except when employed in cooperation with the state and under the provisions of this chapter and shall not create any indebtedness or incur any liability on behalf of the state: PROVIDED, That rangers actually engaged in extinguishing or preventing the spread of fire on forestland or elsewhere that may endanger forestland shall, when their accounts for such service have been approved by the department, be entitled to receive compensation for such services at a rate to be fixed by the department.

(4) The department may cancel the commission of any ranger or authority granted to any ex officio ranger who may be incompetent or unwilling to discharge properly the duties of the office. [2001 c 253 s 9; 1986 c 100 s 5.]

RCW 76.04.055 Service of notices. Any notice required by law to be served by the department, warden, or ranger shall be sufficient if a written or printed copy thereof is delivered, mailed, telegraphed, or electronically transmitted by the department, warden, or ranger to the person to receive the notice or to his or her responsible agent. If the name or address of the person or agent is unknown and cannot be obtained by reasonable diligence, the notice may be served by posting the copy in a conspicuous place upon the premises concerned by the notice. [1986 c 100 s 6.]

RCW 76.04.065 Arrests without warrants. Department employees appointed as wardens, persons commissioned as rangers, and all police officers may arrest persons violating this chapter, without warrant, as prescribed by law. [1986 c 100 s 7.]

RCW 76.04.075 Rules—Penalty. Any person who violates any of the orders or rules adopted under this chapter for the protection of forests from fires is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to the penalties for a misdemeanor under RCW 9A.20.021, unless another penalty is provided. [1986 c 100 s 8.]

RCW 76.04.085 Penalty for violations. Unless specified otherwise, violations of the provisions of this chapter shall be a misdemeanor and subject to the penalties for a misdemeanor under RCW 9A.20.021. [1986 c 100 s 9.]

RCW 76.04.095 Cooperative protection. When any responsible protective agency or agencies composed of timber owners other than the state agrees to undertake systematic forest protection in cooperation with the state and such cooperation appears to the department to be more advantageous to the state than the state-provided forest fire services, the department may designate suitable areas to be official cooperative districts and substitute cooperative services for the state-provided services. The department may cooperate in the compensation for expenses of preventing and controlling fire in cooperative districts to the extent it considers equitable on behalf of the state. [1986 c 100 s 10.]

RCW 76.04.105 Contracts for protection and development. The department may enter into contracts and undertakings with private corporations for the protection and development of the forestlands within the state, subject to the provisions of this chapter. [1986 c 100 s 11.]

RCW 76.04.115 Articles of incorporation—Requirements. Before any private corporation may enter into any contract under RCW 76.04.105, there shall be incorporated into the articles of incorporation or charter of such corporation a provision requiring that the corporation, out of its earnings or earned surplus, and in a manner satisfactory to the department, annually set apart funds to discharge any contract entered into between such corporation and the department. [1986 c 100 s 12.]

RCW 76.04.125 Requisites of contract. Any undertaking for the protection and development of the forestlands of the state under RCW 76.04.105 shall be regulated and controlled by a contract to be entered into between the private corporation and the department. The contract shall outline the lands involved and the conditions and details of the undertaking, including an exact specification of the amount of funds to be made available by the corporation and the time and manner of disbursement. Before entering into any such contract, the department shall be satisfied that the private corporation is financially solvent and will be able to carry out the project outlined in the contract. The department shall have charge of the project for the protection and development of the forestlands described in the contract, and any expense incurred by the department under any such contract shall be payable solely by the corporation from the funds provided by it for these purposes. The state of Washington shall not in any event be responsible to any person, firm, company, or corporation for any indebtedness created by any corporation under a contract pursuant to RCW 76.04.105. [1986 c 100 s 13.]

RCW 76.04.135 Cooperative agreements—Public agencies—Transfer of ownership of department-owned firefighting vehicle, procedure. (1) For the purpose of promoting and facilitating cooperation among fire protection agencies, including the department, and between the department and other agencies that manage lands owned by the state, and to more adequately protect life, property, and the natural

resources of the state, the department may enter into a contract or agreement with a municipality, county, state, or federal agency to provide fire detection, prevention, presuppression, or suppression services on property which they are responsible to protect or manage.

(2) Contracts or agreements under subsection (1) of this section may contain provisions for the exchange of services on a cooperative basis or services in return for cash payment or other compensation.

(3) No charges may be made when the department determines that under a cooperative contract or agreement the assistance received from a municipality, county, or federal agency on state protected lands equals that provided by the state on municipal, county, or federal lands.

(4) The department may transfer ownership of depreciated firefighting vehicles and related equipment upon terms subject to mutual agreement to local fire districts in wildfire prone areas in all areas of the state, as determined by the department, and where the median household income is below the state average. These vehicle and equipment transfers are exempt from the requirements in RCW 43.19.1919(1). The department must notify the chairs and ranking members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction regarding these transfers at least ten days prior to transfer of the equipment. [2017 c 280 s 2; 2012 c 38 s 2; 1986 c 100 s 14.]

Effective date—2017 c 280: See note following RCW 43.30.575.

RCW 76.04.155 Firefighting—Employment—Assistance. (1) The department may employ a sufficient number of persons to extinguish or prevent the spreading of any fire that may be in danger of damaging or destroying any timber or other property on department protected lands. The department may provide needed tools and supplies and may provide transportation when necessary for persons so employed.

(2) Every person so employed is entitled to compensation at a rate to be fixed by the department. The department shall, upon request, show the person the number of hours worked by that person and the rate established for payment. After approval of the department, that person is entitled to receive payment from the state.

(3) It is unlawful to fail to render assistance when called upon by the department to aid in guarding or extinguishing any fire. [1986 c 100 s 16.]

RCW 76.04.165 Legislative declaration—Forest protection zones.

(1) The legislature finds and declares that forestlands within the state are increasingly being used for residential purposes; that the risk to life and property is increasing from forest fires which may destroy developed property; that, based on the primary missions for the respective fire control agencies established in this chapter, adjustment of the geographic areas of responsibility has not kept pace with the increasing use of forestlands for residential purposes; and that the department should work with the state's other fire control agencies to define geographic areas of responsibility that are more consistent with their respective primary missions.

(2) To accomplish the purposes of subsection (1) of this section, the department shall establish a procedure to clarify its geographic areas of responsibility. The areas of department protection shall be

called forest protection zones. The forest protection zones shall include all forestland which the department is obligated to protect but shall not include forestland within rural fire districts or municipal fire districts which affected local fire control agencies agree, by mutual consent with the department, is not appropriate for department protection. Forestland not included within a forest protection zone established by mutual agreement of the department and a rural fire district or a municipal fire district shall not be assessed under RCW 76.04.610 or 76.04.630.

(3) After the department and any affected local fire protection agencies have agreed on the boundary of a forest protection zone, the department shall establish the boundary by rule under chapter 34.05 RCW.

(4) Except by agreement of the affected parties, the establishment of forest protection zones shall not alter any mutual aid agreement. [1995 c 151 s 2; 1988 c 273 s 2.]

RCW 76.04.167 Legislative declaration—Equitable sharing of forest fire protection costs—Coordinated forest fire protection and suppression. (1) The legislature hereby finds and declares that:

(a) Forest wildfires are a threat to public health and safety and can cause catastrophic damage to public and private resources, including clean air, clean water, fish and wildlife habitat, timber resources, forest soils, scenic beauty, recreational opportunities, economic and employment opportunities, structures, and other improvements;

(b) Forestland owners and the public have a shared interest in protecting forests and forest resources by preventing and suppressing forest wildfires;

(c) A recent independent analysis of the state fire program considered it imperative to restore a more equitable split between the general fund and forest protection assessments;

(d) Without a substantial increase in forest protection funds, the state's citizens will be paying much more money for emergency fire suppression; and

(e) It is therefore the intent of the legislature that the costs of fire protection be equitably shared between the forest protection assessment account and state contributions to ensure that there will be sufficient firefighters who are equipped and trained to respond quickly to fires in order to keep fires small and manage those large fires that do occur. In recognition of increases in landowner assessments, the legislature declares its intent that increases in the state's share for forest protection should be provided to stabilize the funding for the forest protection program, and that sufficient state funds should be committed to the forest protection program so that the recommendations contained in the 1997 tridata report can be implemented on an equitable basis.

(2) The legislature hereby finds and declares that it is in the public interest to establish and maintain a complete, cooperative, and coordinated forest fire protection and suppression program for the state; that, second only to saving lives, the primary mission of the department is protecting forest resources and suppressing forest wildfires; that a primary mission of rural fire districts and municipal fire departments is protecting improved property and suppressing structural fires; and that the most effective way to

protect structures is for the department to focus its efforts and resources on aggressively suppressing forest wildfires.

(3) The legislature also acknowledges the natural role of fire in forest ecosystems, and finds and declares it in the public interest to use fire under controlled conditions to prevent wildfires by maintaining healthy forests and eliminating sources of fuel. [2001 c 279 s 1; 1995 c 151 s 1.]

RCW 76.04.175 Fire suppression equipment—Comparison of costs.

(1) The department shall, by June 1 of each year, establish a list of fire suppression equipment, such as portable showers, kitchens, water tanks, dozers, and hauling equipment, provided by the department so that the cost by unit or category can be determined and can be compared to the expense of utilizing private vendors.

(2) The department shall establish a roster of quotes by vendors who are able to provide equipment to respond to incidents involving wildfires on department-protected lands. The department shall use these quotes from private vendors to make a comparison with the costs established in subsection (1) of this section. The department shall utilize the most effective and efficient resource available for responding to wildfires. [1995 c 113 s 2.]

Finding—Intent—1995 c 113: "The legislature finds that it is frequently in the best interest of the state to utilize fire suppression equipment from private vendors whenever possible in responding to incidents involving wildfires on department-protected lands. It is the intent of the legislature to encourage the department of natural resources to utilize kitchen, shower, and other fire suppression equipment from private vendors as allowed in RCW 76.04.015(4) (b), when such utilization will be most effective and efficient." [1995 c 113 s 1.]

RCW 76.04.177 Fire suppression equipment—Requirement to utilize private equipment. Before constructing or purchasing any equipment listed in RCW 76.04.175(1) for wildfire suppression, the department shall compare the per use cost of the equipment to be purchased or constructed with the per use cost of utilizing private equipment. If utilizing private equipment is more effective and efficient, the department may not construct or purchase the equipment but shall utilize the equipment from the lowest responsive bidder. [1995 c 113 s 3.]

Finding—Intent—1995 c 113: See note following RCW 76.04.175.

RCW 76.04.179 Wildland fire advisory committee. (1) The commissioner must appoint and maintain a wildland fire advisory committee to generally advise the commissioner on all matters related to wildland firefighting in the state. This includes, but is not limited to, developing recommendations regarding department capital budget requests related to wildland firefighting and developing strategies to enhance the safe and effective use of private and public wildland firefighting resources.

(2) The commissioner may appoint members to the wildland fire advisory committee as the commissioner determines is the most helpful in the discharge of the commissioner's duties. However, at a minimum, the commissioner must invite the following:

(a) Two county commissioners, one from east of the crest of the Cascade mountains and one from west of the crest of the Cascade mountains;

(b) Two owners of industrial land, one an owner of timberland and one an owner of rangeland;

(c) The state fire marshal or a representative of the state fire marshal's office;

(d) Two individuals with the title of fire chief, one from a community located east of the crest of the Cascade mountains and one from a community located west of the crest of the Cascade mountains;

(e) An individual with the title of fire commissioner whose authority is pursuant to chapter 52.14 RCW;

(f) A representative of a federal wildland firefighting agency;

(g) A representative of a tribal nation;

(h) A representative of a statewide environmental organization;

(i) A representative of a state land trust beneficiary; and

(j) A small forestland owner.

(3) The local wildland fire liaison serves as the administrative chair for the wildland fire advisory committee.

(4) The department must provide staff support for all committee meetings.

(5) The wildland fire advisory committee must meet at the call of the administrative chair for any purpose that directly relates to the duties set forth in subsection (1) of this section or as is otherwise requested by the commissioner or the administrative chair.

(6) Each member of the wildland fire advisory committee serves without compensation but may be reimbursed for travel expenses as authorized in RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

(7) The members of the wildland fire advisory committee, or individuals acting on their behalf, are immune from civil liability for official acts performed in the course of their duties.

(8) All requirements in this section are subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for the specific purposes described. [2015 c 182 s 3.]

RCW 76.04.181 Maximizing the utilization of local fire suppression assets—Department's duty. (1) To maximize the effective utilization of local fire suppression assets, the department is required to:

(a) Actively engage in ongoing prefire season outreach and recruitment of qualified wildland fire suppression contractors and equipment owners who have valid incident qualifications for the type of contracted work to be performed and compile and annually update a master list of the qualified contractors. In order to be included on a master list of qualified wildland fire suppression contractors:

(i) Contractors providing fire engines, tenders, crews, or similar resources must have training and qualifications sufficient for federal wildland fire contractor eligibility, including possessing a valid incident qualification card, commonly called a red card; and

(ii) Contractors other than those identified in (a)(i) of this subsection must have training and qualifications evidenced by

possession of a valid department qualification and safety document, commonly called a blue card, issued to people cooperating with the department pursuant to an agreement;

(b) Provide timely advance notification of the dates and locations of department blue card training to all potential wildland fire suppression contractors known to the department and make the training available in several locations that are reasonably convenient for contractors;

(c) Organize the lists of qualified wildland fire suppression contractors to identify the counties where the contractors are located and make the lists, and the availability status of the contractors on the list, available to emergency dispatchers, county legislative authorities, emergency management departments, and local fire districts;

(d) Cooperate with federal wildland firefighting agencies to prioritize, based on predicted need, the efficient use of local resources in close proximity to wildland fire incidents, including local private wildland suppression contractors;

(e) Enter into preemptive agreements with landowners and other contractors in possession of firefighting capability that may be utilized in wildland fire suppression efforts, including the use of bulldozers, fallers, fuel tenders, potable water tenders, water sprayers, wash trailers, refrigeration units, and buses; and

(f) Conduct outreach to provide basic incident command system and wildland fire safety training to landowners in possession of firefighting capability to help ensure that any wildland fire suppression actions taken by private landowners on their own land are accomplished safely and in coordination with any related incident command structure.

(2) The local wildland fire liaison may play an active role in the outreach and recruitment of wildland fire suppression contractors under subsection (1) of this section. This effort may include, but is not limited to, reaching out to local fire districts and collecting their knowledge to identify potential fire suppression contractors.

(3) Nothing in subsection (1) of this section prohibits the department from:

(a) Engaging, as needed, local private wildland fire suppression contractors not included on the master list or subject to a preemptive agreement; or

(b) Conducting safety training on the site of a wildland fire in order to utilize available contractors not included on a master list of qualified wildland fire suppression contractors.

(4) When entering into preemptive agreements with landowners and other contractors under this section, the department must:

(a) Ensure that all equipment and personnel satisfy department standards, including any applicable safety training certifications required by the department of labor and industries;

(b) Ensure that all contractors are, when engaged in fire suppression activities, under the supervision of recognized wildland fire personnel;

(c) Verify that the agreements have been finalized with an agreed upon standard operating rate identified before being included on the master list of qualified contractors; and

(d) Inspect, or verify the inspection of, any equipment included in the agreement to ensure that all safety and dependability standards are satisfied.

(5) The department may authorize operational field personnel to carry additional personal protection [protective] equipment in order to loan the equipment to private fire suppression contractors as needed.

(6) No civil liability may be imposed by any court on the state or its officers and employees for any adverse impacts resulting from training or personal protection [protective] equipment provided by the department or preemptive agreements entered into by the department under the provisions of this section except upon proof of gross negligence or willful or wanton misconduct.

(5) [(7)] All requirements in this section are subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for the specific purposes described. [2017 c 104 s 1; 2015 c 182 s 6.]

Effective date—2017 c 104: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect June 30, 2017." [2017 c 104 s 4.]

RCW 76.04.183 Prescribed burn manager certification program—

Rule-making authority. (1) Subject to availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department must create a prescribed burn manager certification program for those who practice prescribed burning in the state. The certification program must include training on all relevant aspects of prescribed fire in Washington including, but not limited to, the following: Legal requirements; safety; weather; fire behavior; smoke management; prescribed fire techniques; public relations; planning; and contingencies.

(2) The department may not require certification under the program created under subsection (1) of this section for burn permit approval under this chapter. Nothing in this section may be construed as creating a mandatory prescribed burn manager certification requirement to conduct prescribed burning in Washington.

(3) No civil or criminal liability may be imposed by any court, the state, or its officers and employees, on a prescribed burn manager certified under the program created under subsection (1) of this section, for any direct or proximate adverse impacts resulting from a prescribed fire conducted under the provisions of this chapter except upon proof of gross negligence or willful or wanton misconduct.

(4) The department may adopt rules to create the prescribed burn manager certification program and to set periodic renewal criteria. The rules should be developed in consultation with prescribed burn programs in other states. The department may also adopt rules to establish a decertification process for certified prescribed burn managers who commit a violation under this chapter or rules adopted under this chapter. The department may, in its own discretion, develop an equivalency test for experienced prescribed burn managers.

(5) Certified prescribed burn managers may be issued burn permits with modified requirements in recognition of their training and skills. In such cases, normal smoke management and fire risk parameters apply. [2018 c 172 s 1.]

RCW 76.04.185 Electric utility wildfire mitigation plan. (1)

The department, in consultation with the energy resilience and emergency management office of the department of commerce, shall contract with an independent consultant with experience in developing electric utility wildfire mitigation plans to develop an electric utility wildfire mitigation plan format and a list of elements to be included in electric utility wildfire mitigation plans. When developing the plan format and list of elements, the department shall seek input from the utilities and transportation commission, the utility wildland fire prevention advisory committee, electric utilities, the state fire marshal, the governor's office of Indian affairs, and the public. By April 1, 2024, the department shall make public a recommended format and list of elements for electric utility wildfire mitigation plans. The department may update these guidelines annually if needed, but not more than once in each year.

(2) The recommended elements must acknowledge that utilities serve areas that vary in topography, vegetation, population, and other characteristics, and that best practices guidelines within each element must recognize that a utility's wildfire mitigation measures will be designed to fit site-specific circumstances. The recommended elements must include, but are not limited to:

(a) Vegetation management along transmission and distribution lines and near associated equipment;

(b) Infrastructure inspection and maintenance repair activities, schedules, and recordkeeping;

(c) Modifications or upgrades to facilities and construction of new facilities to incorporate cost-effective measures to minimize fire risk;

(d) Preventative programs, including adoption of new technologies to harden utility infrastructure;

(e) Operational procedures;

(f) Identification of appropriate widths for vegetation management and rights-of-way, including the consideration of fire-resistant vegetation alternatives; and

(g) Public and interested parties' engagement and communication plans addressing wildfire safety and risk mitigation.

(3) The recommended format and list of elements identified by the department must be forwarded to the utilities and transportation commission, the energy resilience and emergency management office of the department of commerce, and all electric utilities in Washington state for a review period of no less than three months prior to finalizing the format and list of elements that utilities will use to adopt or update their electric utility wildfire mitigation plan.

(4) The department will provide technical assistance to all electric utilities to support inclusion of these guidelines in the revision of their plans.

(5) By December 31, 2024, the department must submit to the appropriate committees of the senate and house of representatives a compilation and summary of existing wildfire mitigation plans maintained by electric utilities.

(6) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "Consumer-owned utility" means a municipal electric utility formed under Title 35 RCW, a public utility district formed under Title 54 RCW, an irrigation district formed under chapter 87.03 RCW, a cooperative formed under chapter 23.86 RCW, or a mutual corporation or association formed under chapter 24.06 RCW, that is engaged in the

business of distributing electricity to more than one retail electric customer in the state.

(b) "Electric utility" means a consumer-owned utility or an investor-owned utility as defined in this section.

(c) "Investor-owned utility" means a corporation owned by investors that meets the definition of "corporation" as defined in RCW 80.04.010 and is engaged in distributing electricity to more than one retail electric customer in the state. [2023 c 132 s 2.]

Findings—Intent—2023 c 132: "(1) It is in the best interest of the state, our citizens, and our natural resources to identify the sources of wildland fires; identify and implement best practices to reduce the prevalence and intensity of those wildland fires; put those practices in place; and by putting those practices in place, reduce the risk of wildland fires and damage and losses resulting from those fires.

(2) The legislature finds that electric utilities are partners with relevant state agencies, emergency responders, and public and private entities in identifying best practices to reduce the risk of and prevent wildland fires. Many electric utilities have developed and are implementing wildfire mitigation plans. The legislature further finds that electric utilities should adopt and implement wildfire mitigation plans, and that electric utilities should be informed by recognized best practices, as applicable to their geography, terrain, vegetation, and other characteristics specific in their service area, for reducing wildland fire risk and reducing damage from wildland fires as may be ignited by electric utility equipment.

(3) Therefore, the legislature intends to authorize the identification of best practices guidelines and to require that electric utilities provide their wildfire mitigation plans to the state in order to promote public transparency." [2023 c 132 s 1.]

RCW 76.04.187 Wildfire risk assessment—Public safety evacuation strategies—Emergency disaster and evacuation plan messaging—Other departmental duties. (1)(a) The department must assess areas at significant risk for wildfire, by decade, for a period encompassing not less than 30 years. The assessment must include an analysis of the predicted climate influence on wildfire risk in the state and provide enough detail for landowners, the public, local governments, and federally recognized Indian tribes to develop strategies to address wildfire risk. The department must provide the first risk assessment to the appropriate committees of the legislature by July 1, 2027, covering a risk assessment period of July 1, 2027, through June 30, 2037. A subsequent decadal assessment is due to the appropriate committees of the legislature every 10 years thereafter. The department must also provide a mid-decade interim report to the appropriate committees of the legislature by July 1, 2032, and every 10 years thereafter.

(b) The department must coordinate with counties on an update to wildland urban interface maps consistent with RCW 43.30.580.

(2) The department, in consultation with the Washington military department emergency management division and the Washington state patrol, must cooperate with law enforcement, federally recognized Indian tribes, emergency managers at the city and county level, and local fire protection districts to develop public safety evacuation

strategies for areas identified in the respective decadal assessments as facing significant risk of wildfire. The department must provide support to help incorporate wildfire evacuation strategies within existing regional and local emergency response plans. Implementation of evacuation strategies remains under the authority of local law enforcement.

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

(4) Further, the department shall:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

health challenges, and those experiencing unstable housing arrangements;

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

(d) By July 1, 2028, implement a postwildfire debris flow program. The department shall identify areas prone to hazards from postwildfire debris flows, assess burned areas to determine potential for increases in postwildfire debris flow hazards, improve modeling to determine triggers for postwildfire debris flow early warning for at-risk communities and infrastructure, and communicate to emergency managers, local governments, stakeholders, state agencies, and the public both for preparedness and response; and

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

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

(6) Until July 1, 2025, the assessments and reports required by this section are only intended to assist with improving community preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience to wildland fires and are not intended and may not be used in the development of, or as the basis of, any regulations by a state agency or a local governmental entity. [2023 c 385 s 2.]

Findings—2023 c 385: "(1) The legislature recognizes that, just as the forests on the east side of the state are being impacted by climate change, western Washington forests, too, are seeing increasing vulnerabilities to forest health and resilience. The frequency and severity of wildfires, resulting smoke incursions, and postfire flash floods and debris flow in areas of increasing population density are expected to intensify in the years to come, fueled by drought, pests, and disease, and increasing temperatures.

(2) The legislature recognizes that communities within the wildland urban interface and in areas of high or growing population

density are increasingly experiencing more frequent and severe wildfires, resulting smoke exposure, flash floods, and debris flow, and that this intensifies health and safety hazards for residents, infrastructure, and ecosystems.

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

(4) The legislature acknowledges that public health and emergency management preparedness aligns with the state's environmental justice goals, where programming and interventions support vulnerable populations and those living in regions experiencing disproportionately high levels of wildfire, air pollutants, and smoke exposure.

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

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

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

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

ventilation purposes, which inadvertently allows smoke to enter the home and degrade indoor air quality.

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

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

(11) Therefore, the legislature finds that, given the increasing impacts on the rapidly growing wildland urban interface and in areas of increasing population density, the department of natural resources must now also accelerate efforts to address the threats facing them. This includes, but is not limited to, improving community preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience related to wildland fire, smoke, and postfire flash floods and debris flow." [2023 c 385 s 1.]

Short title—2023 c 385: "This act may be known and cited as the cascading impacts of wildfires act." [2023 c 385 s 3.]

RCW 76.04.192 Aviation usage by local fire departments—Report to the legislature. (Expires July 1, 2027.) (1) The department shall prepare and submit, consistent with RCW 43.01.036, an appendix on aviation usage by local fire departments for initial attack as a part of its annual wildfire report to the standing committees of the legislature with jurisdiction over wildland firefighting. The department shall submit the report by December 1st of each year. The report must address, at a minimum, the following topics:

(a) The dollar value of funding utilized by local fire departments for initial attack aviation during the year;

(b) The specific local fire departments that utilized this funding during the year;

(c) The wildland fires on which suppression funding was utilized to provide local fire departments initial attack aviation resources during the year, including names, locations, and sizes of fires, and amount of funding utilized on each of the fires; and

(d) A review of lessons learned related to aviation use by local fire departments for initial attack based on the preceding fire season, along with recommendations for future improvements to the wildland fire response process based on the lessons learned.

(2) The department shall consult with the state fire defense committee, fire service representatives, and the state fire marshal's office annually to review aviation program performance and determine aviation needs for the following fire year. [2023 c 457 s 2.]

Intent—2023 c 457: "(1) Local and tribal fire departments in the state of Washington serve as frontline responders to wildland fires. The fire chief of each local fire department with jurisdiction over wildland fires is tasked with making rapid decisions, especially

during the summer months when weather conditions can cause fires to rapidly enlarge. Flashy fuels, especially during times of low humidity, can be ignited by a single spark and erupt into a rapidly moving incident that can quickly destroy rangelands, ripe dryland crops, and timberlands.

(2) Local fire departments need immediate access to local aviation resources that are certified to fly and drop fire retardants and water to suppress or extinguish wildland fires quickly. The use of aviation assets has proven to be a valuable tool to prevent many wildland fires from growing large and requiring the response of state mobilization and prevent the deployment of state and federal fire agencies and their mobilization partner agencies.

(3) Further, the strategic use of aviation assets in initial attack, or at times when conditions on the ground may warrant additional air support, can prevent fires from becoming uncontrollable. Local fire departments that use aviation assets on initial attack can prevent most fires from requiring a state mobilization. Providing financial assurances for local fire departments to deploy aviation assets will provide greater protection to our state's natural resources, air quality, and communities.

(4) The legislature intends to provide suppression funding to the department of natural resources to support local fire departments in the use of aviation resources certified and trained to operate in wildland fires and drop fire retardant or water to suppress or extinguish fires as an initial attack strategy. Deployment and air operations command will be conducted at the direction of trained air operations commanders.

(5) The legislature intends to authorize the department of natural resources to provide aviation resources to local fire departments statewide for use during the initial attack of wildland fires in order to provide assurance that local fire departments will have sufficient financial capacity to effectively control wildland fires throughout the length of the fire season. Having assurance that local fire departments can afford to use aircraft under conditions that would warrant their use and at the discretion of the local fire department chief will incentivize the use of aircraft more quickly in order to rapidly suppress the fire and minimize damage to lands, resources, and structures, while protecting regional air quality."
[2023 c 457 s 1.]

Expiration date—2023 c 457: "This act expires July 1, 2027."
[2023 c 457 s 5.]

RCW 76.04.194 Aerial fire response—Use of suppression funding. (Expires July 1, 2027.) (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department must use suppression funding to assist local fire departments with aerial fire response capabilities during the critical initial attack phase of fighting a wildland fire.

(2) The department must use suppression funding to assist local fire departments with initial attacks that meet the following requirements:

(a) The local fire department must have entered into a response agreement with the department;

(b) The local fire department must provide documentation to the department that personnel have received training regarding the use of aviation assets in initial attack and criteria to use for determining when to call for aviation assets;

(c) The aviation assets used in initial attack must come from a list of private contractors approved by the department on exclusive use or call-when-needed agreements based upon the annual review of aviation response and aviation needs required in RCW 76.04.192(2);

(d) Local fire departments must make direct requests to the appropriate coordination center, including the central Washington interagency coordination center, the northeast Washington interagency coordination center, the Blue Mountain interagency coordination center, or the department of natural resources coordination center, in order to ensure the safe coordination of all aircraft; and

(e) Upon receiving a request for aviation assets under this section, the coordinating agency must notify the director of fire protection or that individual's designee to ensure operational knowledge of a potential future request to invoke the fire service mobilization plan under RCW 43.43.960. [2023 c 457 s 3.]

Intent—Expiration date—2023 c 457: See notes following RCW 76.04.192.

RCW 76.04.196 Prescribed fire claims fund pilot program—Prescribed fire claims account. (Expires June 30, 2033.) (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the office of risk management shall, in consultation with the department, establish a prescribed fire claims fund pilot program for the purposes of:

(a) Supporting coverage for losses from prescribed fires and cultural burning on department protected lands and on tribal lands where an agreement exists between the Indian tribe and the department or where approved by the Indian tribe. The fund would not be utilized when prescribed fires or cultural burning have federal tort claims act coverage under a federally recognized burn plan; and

(b) Supporting nonstate and nonfederal entities that are alleged to have caused damages resulting from appropriately conducted prescribed fires or cultural burning on department protected lands and tribal lands as described in (a) of this subsection.

(2) To be eligible for reimbursement under this section, a claim must meet the criteria in (a) and (b) of this subsection.

(a) The claim results from a prescribed fire or cultural burn conducted on department protected lands and tribal lands as described in subsection (1)(a) of this section:

(i) By a certified burn manager, under an approved burn plan, with applicable permits and in accordance with any other applicable conditions or requirements as determined by the department; or

(ii) By a cultural fire practitioner, in accordance with any applicable burn plan or permit.

(b) The claim is for:

(i) Property or economic damage, as described under RCW 76.04.760(3) (a), (c), and (d), suffered by the claimant as a result of the prescribed fire or cultural burn;

(ii) Reasonable costs authorized for reimbursement by the department under RCW 76.04.475, related to the prescribed fire or cultural burn; or

(iii) Costs of suppression of an escapement for which a person is liable to a third party.

(c) A claim for damage suffered as a result of a prescribed fire or cultural burn started, spread, or otherwise caused by a criminal or negligent act is not eligible for reimbursement under this section.

(3) Upon submission of a claim, the department shall determine and certify to the office of risk management whether the claim meets the criteria in subsection (2) of this section.

(4) The office of risk management may reimburse an eligible claim in an amount equal to or less than the actual losses suffered by the claimant, not to exceed \$2,000,000 per claim. The payment of a claim under this section is conditional on the availability of specific funding for this purpose, and nothing in this section shall be construed to create an entitlement to reimbursement or payment of any claim. The total amount paid for claims may not exceed the amounts available in the account established in subsection (7) of this section.

(5)(a) The office of risk management shall collaborate with the department, other relevant state agencies, the Washington prescribed fire council, cultural fire practitioners, and certified burn managers to establish guidelines governing the pilot program and the administration of the account established in subsection (7) of this section, including:

(i) Procedures for the submission of claims;

(ii) Any additional criteria for claim eligibility, as appropriate; and

(iii) A methodology or structure for how the payment of claims will be prioritized in the event that eligible claims exceed the amounts available in the account established in subsection (7) of this section.

(b) The office of risk management and the department may adopt rules to implement this section.

(c) Guidelines and any rules adopted under this section must be made publicly available on the websites of the office of risk management and the department.

(6) This section does not limit the ability of a person to assert a claim for damages arising from a prescribed fire under any other law. A court shall offset any award of damages to a claimant under an action arising from the same set of alleged facts by the amount of reimbursement provided under this section.

(7)(a) The prescribed fire claims account is created in the state treasury. Moneys in the account may be spent only after appropriation. Expenditures from the account may only be used for the reimbursement of claims under this section.

(b) Upon the expiration of this section, any remaining amounts in the account must be deposited in the natural climate solutions account.

(8) For the purposes of this section:

(a) "Certified burn manager" means a prescribed burn manager certified under RCW 76.04.183 or a prescribed fire burn boss certified under the national wildfire coordinating group standards.

(b) "Cultural fire practitioner" means a person approved by an Indian tribe as having experience in burning to meet cultural goals or

objectives, including subsistence, ceremonial activities, biodiversity, or other benefits.

(c) "Department protected lands" has the same meaning as in RCW 76.04.005.

(d) "Indian tribe" has the same meaning as in RCW 43.376.010.

(9) This section expires June 30, 2033. [2025 c 93 s 2.]

Findings—Intent—2025 c 93: "(1) The legislature finds that Washington is experiencing a forest health crisis. Rangeland and forest fires have grown both larger and more damaging in recent years, threatening the health, livelihoods, and homes of Washingtonians. Over the last 10 years, wildfires have burned an average of 470,000 acres across the state. According to the 2020 forest health assessment and treatment framework, approximately 3,000,000 acres in eastern Washington alone are in need of active management or disturbance to improve forest resiliency to stressors such as wildfire and drought.

(2) The legislature finds that prescribed fire and cultural burning are one of the most effective, yet underutilized tools to help address the forest health crisis. Most ecosystems in Washington evolved with fire through stewardship by tribal peoples and ignitions like lightning strikes. Prescribed fire and cultural burning remove dead and downed brush and vegetation, providing more management opportunities for fire suppression across a variety of landscapes by proactively removing hazardous fuels. Compared to wildfire smoke, prescribed fire smoke produces up to 50 percent less PM2.5. Fire also returns important nutrients to the soil, revitalizes plant growth, and improves wildlife habitat. Tribes have used cultural burning since time immemorial to sustain healthy and resilient lands.

(3) The legislature finds that growing risks of wildfires to communities and the environment generally requires at least a five-fold increase in prescribed burning to effectively reduce accumulated fuels, restore resiliency to landscapes, and protect communities.

(4) The legislature further finds that while prescribed fire escapements are rare, the uncertain financial implications associated with an escapement deter this work despite its low risk. The 2023 Washington prescribed fire barriers assessment report and strategic action plan found that one of the most significant barriers to more prescribed burns has been uncertainty around potential liability.

(5) Therefore, the legislature intends to establish a fire claims fund pilot program to provide loss coverage for prescribed and cultural burns conducted in accordance with applicable requirements. By decreasing the uncertainty associated with these regulated burns, the legislature intends to promote the use of this critical tool for strengthening and protecting our resources and communities." [2025 c 93 s 1.]

Effective date—2025 c 93: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [April 21, 2025]." [2025 c 93 s 6.]

PERMITS

RCW 76.04.205 Burning permits—Civil penalty. (1) Except in certain areas designated by the department or as permitted under rules adopted by the department, a person shall have a valid written burning permit obtained from the department to burn:

(a) Any flammable material on any lands under the protection of the department; or

(b) Refuse or waste forest material on forestlands protected by the department.

(2) To be valid a permit must be signed by both the department and the permittee. Conditions may be imposed in the permit for the protection of life, property, or air quality and the department may suspend or revoke the permits when conditions warrant. A permit shall be effective only under the conditions and for the period stated therein. Signing of the permit shall indicate the permittee's agreement to and acceptance of the conditions of the permit.

(3) The department may inspect or cause to be inspected the area involved and may issue a burning permit if:

(a) All requirements relating to firefighting equipment, the work to be done, and precautions to be taken before commencing the burning have been met;

(b) No unreasonable danger will result; and

(c) Burning will be done in compliance with air quality standards established by chapter 70A.15 RCW.

(4) The department, authorized employees thereof, or any warden or ranger may refuse, revoke, or postpone the use of permits to burn when necessary for the safety of adjacent property or when necessary in their judgment to prevent air pollution as provided in chapter 70A.15 RCW.

(5) Any person who violates this section, any permit issued under this section, any rules that implement this section, or the silvicultural burning provisions set forth in chapter 70A.15 RCW, may incur a civil penalty pursuant to RCW 70A.15.3160. The department shall adopt a rule that establishes: (a) A framework for resolving conflicts that may arise related to this section, including the issuance of civil penalties pursuant to RCW 70A.15.3160 for violations of this section; and (b) the method by which penalties issued pursuant to RCW 70A.15.3160 for violations of this section will be calculated. The department shall conduct a public process to solicit input on the development of the rule. [2021 c 132 s 2; 2021 c 65 s 79; 1986 c 100 s 17.]

Reviser's note: This section was amended by 2021 c 65 s 79 and by 2021 c 132 s 2, each without reference to the other. Both amendments are incorporated in the publication of this section under RCW 1.12.025(2). For rule of construction, see RCW 1.12.025(1).

Explanatory statement—2021 c 65: See note following RCW 53.54.030.

RCW 76.04.215 Burning mill wood waste—Arresters. (1) It is unlawful for anyone manufacturing lumber or shingles, or other forest products, to destroy wood waste material by burning within one-fourth of one mile of any forest material without properly confining the place of the burning and without further safeguarding the surrounding property against danger from the burning by such additional devices as the department may require.

(2) It is unlawful for anyone to destroy any wood waste material by fire within any burner or destructor operated within one-fourth of one mile of any forest material, or to operate any power-producing plant using in connection therewith any smokestack, chimney, or other spark-emitting outlet, without installing and maintaining on such burner, or destructor, or on such smokestack, chimney, or other spark-emitting outlet, a safe and suitable device for arresting sparks. [1986 c 100 s 18.]

RCW 76.04.235 Dumping mill waste, forest debris—Penalty. (1) No person may dump mill waste from forest products, or forest debris of any kind, in quantities that the department declares to constitute a forest fire hazard on or threatening forestlands located in this state without first obtaining a written permit issued by the department on such terms and conditions determined by the department pursuant to rules enacted to protect forestlands from fire. The permit is in addition to any other permit required by law.

(2) Any person who dumps such mill waste, or forest debris, without a permit, or in violation of a permit is guilty of a gross misdemeanor and subject to the penalties for a gross misdemeanor under RCW 9A.20.021 and may further be required to remove all materials dumped. [1986 c 100 s 19.]

RCW 76.04.246 Use of blasting fuse. It is unlawful to use fuse for blasting on any area of logging slash or area of actual logging operation without a permit during the closed season. Upon the issuance of a written permit by the department or warden or ranger, fuse may be used during the closed season under the conditions specified in the permit. [1986 c 100 s 20.]

CLOSURES/SUSPENSIONS

RCW 76.04.305 Closed to entry—Designation. (1) When, in the opinion of the department, any forestland is particularly exposed to fire danger, the department may designate such land as a region of extra fire hazard subject to closure, and the department shall adopt rules for the protection thereof.

(2) All such rules shall be published in such newspapers of general circulation in the counties wherein such region is situated and for such length of time as the department may determine.

(3) When in the opinion of the department it becomes necessary to close the region to entry, posters carrying the wording "Region of extra fire hazard-CLOSED TO ENTRY-except as provided by RCW 76.04.305" and indicating the beginning and ending dates of the closures shall be posted on the public highways entering the regions.

(4) The rules shall be in force from the time specified therein, but when in the opinion of the department such forest region continues to be exposed to fire danger, or ceases to be so exposed, the department may extend, suspend, or terminate the closure by proclamation.

(5) This section does not authorize the department to prohibit the conduct of industrial operations, public work, or access of

permanent residents to their own property within the closed area, but no one legally entering the region of extra fire hazard may use the area for recreational purposes which are prohibited to the general public under the terms of this section. [1986 c 100 s 21.]

RCW 76.04.315 Suspension of burning permits/privileges. In times and localities of unusual fire danger, the department may issue an order suspending any or all burning permits or privileges authorized by RCW 76.04.205 and may prohibit absolutely the use of fire in such locations. [1986 c 100 s 22.]

RCW 76.04.325 Closure of forest operations or forestlands. (1) When in the opinion of the department weather conditions arise which present an extreme fire hazard, whereby life and property may be endangered, the department may issue an order shutting down all logging, land clearing, or other industrial operations which may cause a fire to start. The shutdown shall be for the periods and regions designated in the order. During shutdowns, all persons are excluded from logging operating areas and areas of logging slash, except those present in the interest of fire protection.

(2) When in the opinion of the department extreme fire weather exists, whereby forestlands may be endangered, the department may issue an order restricting access to and activities on forestlands. The order shall describe the regions and extent of restrictions necessary to protect forestlands. During the period in which the order is in effect, all persons may be excluded from the regions described, except those persons present in the interest of fire protection.

(3) Each day's violation of an order under this section shall constitute a separate offense. [1986 c 100 s 23.]

FIRE PROTECTION REGULATION

RCW 76.04.405 Steam, internal combustion, or electrical engines and other spark-emitting equipment regulated. It is unlawful during the closed season for any person to operate any steam, internal combustion, or electric engine, or any other spark-emitting equipment or device, on any forestland or in any place where, in the opinion of the department, fire could spread to forestland, without first complying with the requirements as may be established by the department by rule pursuant to this chapter. [1986 c 100 s 24.]

RCW 76.04.415 Penalty for violations—Work stoppage notice. (1) Every person upon receipt of written notice issued by the department that such person has or is violating any of the provisions of RCW 76.04.215, 76.04.305, 76.04.405, or 76.04.650 or any rule adopted by the department concerning fire prevention and fire suppression preparedness shall cease operations until compliance with the provisions of the sections or rules specified in such notice.

(2) The department may specify in the notice of violation the special conditions and precautions under which the operation would be

allowed to continue until the end of that working day. [1986 c 100 s 25.]

RCW 76.04.425 Unauthorized entry into sealed fire tool box. It is unlawful to enter into a sealed fire tool box without authorization. [1986 c 100 s 26.]

RCW 76.04.435 Deposit of fire or live coals. No person operating a railroad may permit to be deposited by any employee, and no one may deposit fire or live coals, upon the right-of-way within one-fourth of one mile of any forest material, during the closed season, unless the fire or live coals are immediately extinguished. [1986 c 100 s 27.]

RCW 76.04.445 Reports of fire. (1) Any person engaged in any activity on forestlands shall immediately report to the department, in person or by radio, telephone, or telegraph, any fires on forestlands. (2) Railroad companies and other public carriers operating on or through forestlands shall immediately report to the department, in person or by radio, telephone, or telegraph, any fires on or adjacent to their right-of-way or route. [1986 c 100 s 28.]

RCW 76.04.455 Discarding lighted material or smoking flammable material—Discharge, release, or detonation of certain materials—Receptacles in conveyances—Posting a copy of this section. (1) (a) Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, it is unlawful for any person to, during the closed season:

(i) Discard any lighted tobacco, cigars, cigarettes, matches, fireworks, charcoal, or other lighted material, discharge any incendiary ammunition, release a sky lantern, or detonate an exploding target on or over any forest, brush, range, or grain areas; or

(ii) Smoke any flammable material when in forest or brush areas except on roads, cleared landings, gravel pits, or any similar area free of flammable material.

(b) The prohibitions contained in this subsection do not apply to the detonation of nonflammable exploding targets on any forest, brush, range, or grain areas if the person detonating the nonflammable exploding target:

(i) Has lawful possession and control of the land in question; or

(ii) Has prior written permission for the activity from the person who owns or has lawful possession and control of the land in question.

(c) The prohibitions contained in this subsection do not apply to suppression actions authorized or conducted by the department under the authority of this chapter.

(2) (a) Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, it is unlawful for any person to, during any time outside of the closed season, discharge any incendiary ammunition, release a sky lantern, or detonate an exploding target on or over any forest, brush, range, or grain areas.

(b) The prohibitions contained in this subsection do not apply if the person conducting the otherwise prohibited action:

(i) Has lawful possession and control of the land in question; or
(ii) Has prior written permission for the activity from the person who owns or has lawful possession and control of the land in question.

(3) Every conveyance operated through or above forest, range, brush, or grain areas must be equipped in each compartment with a suitable receptacle for the disposition of lighted tobacco, cigars, cigarettes, matches, or other flammable material.

(4) Every person operating a public conveyance through or above forest, range, brush, or grain areas shall post a copy of this section in a conspicuous place within the smoking compartment of the conveyance; and every person operating a saw mill or a logging camp in any such areas shall post a copy of this section in a conspicuous place upon the ground or buildings of the milling or logging operation. [2014 c 90 s 2; 1986 c 100 s 29.]

RCW 76.04.465 Certain snags to be felled currently with logging.

Standing dead trees constitute a substantial deterrent to effective fire control action in forest areas, but are also an important and essential habitat for many species of wildlife. To insure continued existence of these wildlife species and continued forest growth while minimizing the risk of destruction by conflagration, only certain snags must be felled currently with the logging. The department shall adopt rules relating to effective fire control action to require that only certain snags be felled, taking into consideration the need to protect the wildlife habitat. [1986 c 100 s 30.]

RCW 76.04.475 Reimbursement for costs of suppression action.

Any person, firm, or corporation, public or private, obligated to take suppression action on any forest fire is entitled to reimbursement for reasonable costs incurred, subject to the following:

(1) No reimbursement is allowed under this section to a person, firm, or corporation whose negligence is responsible for the starting or existence of any fire for which costs may be recoverable pursuant to law. Reimbursement for fires resulting from slash burns are subject to RCW 76.04.486.

(2) If the fire is started in the course of or as a result of land clearing operations, right-of-way clearing, or a landowner operation, the person, firm, or corporation conducting the operation shall supply:

(a) At no cost to the department, all equipment and able-bodied persons under contract, control, employment, or ownership that are requested by the department and are reasonably available until midnight of the day on which the fire started; and

(b) After midnight of the day on which the fire started, at no cost to the department, all equipment and able-bodied persons under contract, control, employment, or ownership that were within a one-half mile radius of the fire at the time of discovery, until the fire is declared out by the department. In no case may the person, firm, or corporation provide less than one suitable bulldozer and five able-bodied persons, or other equipment accepted by the department as equivalent, unless the department determines less is needed for the purpose of suppressing the fire; and

(c) If the person, firm, or corporation has no personnel or equipment within one-half mile of the fire, payment shall be made to

the department for the minimum requirement of one suitable bulldozer and five able-bodied persons, for the duration of the fire; and

(d) If, after midnight of the day on which the fire started, additional personnel and equipment are requested by the department, the person, firm, or corporation shall supply the personnel and equipment under contract, control, employment, or ownership outside the one-half mile radius, if reasonably available, but shall be reimbursed for such personnel and equipment as provided in subsection (4) of this section.

(3) When a fire which occurred in the course of or as a result of land clearing operations, right-of-way clearing, or a landowner operation, which had previously been suppressed, rekindles, the person, firm, or corporation shall supply the same personnel and equipment, under the same conditions, as were required at the time of the original fire.

(4) Claims for reimbursement shall be submitted within a reasonable time to the department which shall upon verifying the amounts therein and the necessity thereof authorize payment at such rates as established by the department for wages and equipment rental. [1986 c 100 s 31.]

RCW 76.04.486 Escaped slash burns—Obligations. (1) All personnel and equipment required by the burning permit issued for a slash burn may be required by the department, at the permittee's expense, for suppression of a fire resulting from the slash burn until the fire is declared out by the department. In no case may the permittee provide less than one suitable bulldozer and five persons capable of taking suppression action. In addition, if a slash burn becomes an uncontrolled fire the department may recover from the landowner the actual costs incurred in suppressing the fire. The amount collected from the landowner shall be limited to and calculated at the rate of one dollar per acre for the landowner's total forestlands protected by the department, up to a maximum charge of fifty thousand dollars per escaped slash burn.

(2) The landowner contingency forest fire suppression account shall be used to pay and the permittee shall not be responsible for fire suppression expenditures greater than fifty thousand dollars or the total amount calculated for forestlands owned as determined in subsection (1) of this section for each escaped slash burn.

(3) All expenses incurred in suppressing a fire resulting from a slash burn in which negligence was involved shall be the obligation of the landowner. [1986 c 100 s 32.]

RCW 76.04.495 Negligent starting of fires or allowance of extreme fire hazard or debris—Liability—Recovery of reasonable expenses—Lien. (1) Any person, firm, or corporation: (a) Whose negligence is responsible for the starting or existence of a fire which spreads on forestland; or (b) who creates or allows an extreme fire hazard under RCW 76.04.660 to exist and which hazard contributes to the spread of a fire; or (c) who allows forest debris subject to RCW 76.04.650 to exist and which debris contributes to the spread of fire, shall be liable for any reasonable expenses made necessary by (a), (b), or (c) of this subsection. The state, a municipality, a forest protective association, or any fire protection agency of the

United States may recover such reasonable expenses in fighting the fire, together with costs of investigation and litigation including reasonable attorneys' fees and taxable court costs, if the expense was authorized or subsequently approved by the department. The authority granted under this subsection allowing the recovery of reasonable expenses incurred by fire protection agencies of the United States shall apply only to such expenses incurred after June 30, 1993.

(2) The department or agency incurring such expense shall have a lien for the same against any property of the person, firm, or corporation liable under subsection (1) of this section by filing a claim of lien naming the person, firm, or corporation, describing the property against which the lien is claimed, specifying the amount expended on the lands on which the firefighting took place and the period during which the expenses were incurred, and signing the claim with post office address. No claim of lien is valid unless filed, with the county auditor of the county in which the property sought to be charged is located, within a period of ninety days after the expenses of the claimant are incurred. The lien may be foreclosed in the same manner as a mechanic's lien is foreclosed under the statutes of the state of Washington. [1993 c 196 s 2; 1986 c 100 s 33.]

WILDFIRE RESPONSE, FOREST RESTORATION, AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

RCW 76.04.505 Finding—Intent. (1) Over the last decade, forestland and rangeland wildfires have grown larger and increased in intensity and destructiveness throughout Washington state. The annual acres burned in our state illustrates this alarming trend. In the 1990s, an average of 86,000 acres burned annually. In the 2000s, the average annual acres burned increased to 189,000. In the last five years, the annual average grew to more than 488,000 acres burned. This trajectory of escalation continued last year, with wildfires burning more than 812,000 acres.

(2) Recent wildfires have devastated state, federal, tribal, and private lands, destroyed homes and property, and taken lives. These fires have also released greenhouse gases, destroyed critical fish and wildlife habitat, filled our skies with harmful smoke, polluted our waters, damaged our economy, increased the risk of flooding and landslides, created a critical need for reforestation, and threatened the natural resources needed for essential industries and rural economies.

(3) Catastrophic wildfires have significant negative impacts on fish and wildlife habitat, including the loss and degradation of places to shelter and feed, water quality and quantity, and soil nutrients. Washington's fish and wildlife are part of a fire-adapted landscape, but catastrophic wildfires threaten their health and recovery.

(4) The increase in these uncharacteristic wildfires are the result of a combination of climate change-driven drought, hotter temperature, and windstorms; human development patterns and land use planning and activities; and where uncharacteristic fires occur in forests, by past fire suppression and departures from native ecosystem structure and function. Uncharacteristic wildfire risk is addressed through scientifically informed landscape-level treatments designed to restore forest ecosystem and watershed resilience.

(5) Wildfires result in significant greenhouse gas emissions. Wildfires have become one of the largest sources of black carbon in the last five years. From 2014-2018, wildfires in Washington state generated 39.2 million metric tons of carbon, the equivalent of more than 8.5 million cars on the road a year. In 2015, when 1.13 million acres burned in Washington, wildfires were the second largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, second only to transportation.

(6) The legislature has recognized our forests, as well as the manufacturing and utilization of wood products, as a natural carbon solution and critical component of our state's carbon reduction strategy pursuant to chapter 120, Laws of 2020. Uncharacteristic wildfires threaten the ability of our forests to sequester carbon, and they threaten the stability and long-term viability of our forest products industry.

(7) The Washington state department of natural resources' 20-year forest health strategic plan and climate risk assessment finds that carbon emissions from wildfires are anticipated to increase if there is no change in forest management practices. Unless the state significantly increases active forest management across land ownerships to reduce the risk and intensity of wildfires, wildfire emissions will erode efforts to achieve our state's greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals. In addition to reducing fuel loads, many effective forest health treatments retain and restore older, large fire-resilient trees across the landscape that play an important role in carbon sequestration, enhancing climate resilience and ecosystem services, and mitigating climate change.

(8) Wildfires inflict huge costs to the state budget, the budgets of partner agencies, and our economy. From 2014-2019, agencies in Washington annually spent nearly \$150 million fighting wildfires. In 2015, firefighting costs were more than \$342 million. In 2019, firefighting costs were more than \$172 million. And suppression costs are only a small portion of the full economic impact. According to a 2018 report by the nonprofit headwater's economics, suppression costs account for only nine percent of the total cost of wildfires when factoring in disaster recovery, lost business, lost infrastructure, and timber damage, and public health impacts.

(9) Over one-half of Washington is forested, providing significant environmental and economic value. Over \$4,900,000,000 in wages and \$200,000,000 in taxes are paid by the forest products' sector each year. Opportunities exist to boost our rural economies through wildfire preparation and preparedness that maintain and attract private sector investments and employment in rural communities.

(10) Wildfires are significant threats to life and property. Over the last five years, wildfires in Washington have taken five lives, including four firefighters and the life of a one-year old boy. In 2020 alone, 298 homes were destroyed by wildfires in our state. More than 1,100 homes have been destroyed this decade. Communities in every corner of Washington have felt the impact and devastation of flames and smoke. In 2020, the town of Malden, Washington was forever scarred by rangeland wildfire. Approximately 80 percent of the town's structures burned down in the Babb Road fire, including the city hall, post office, and fire station.

(11) Wildfire smoke has significant negative impacts on public health. For the second time in the last three years, Washington state had the worst air quality in the world due to wildfires. Communities in every corner of the state felt the impact. Exposure to particulate

matter in wildfire smoke has been associated with a wide range of damaging health effects. The particulates in this smoke make those breathing the air wheeze, cough, shorten their breath, and experience sore eyes and throats, diminishing health and quality of life. Other adverse health outcomes are more severe, including increases in asthma-related hospitalizations, chronic and acute respiratory and cardiovascular health problems, and premature death.

(12) Historical forest management, legacy wildfire suppression responses, and a rapidly changing climate have increased the risk of catastrophic wildfires throughout the state. It is the policy of the state to encourage prudent and responsible forest resource management to maintain the health of forests and ecosystems in Washington state. Increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration through fuel reduction, thinning, and the use of prescribed fire on federal, state, tribal, and private lands pursuant to the 20-year forest health strategic plan, the wildland fire protection 10-year strategic plan, and RCW 79.10.520 will reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires.

(13) In 2020, more than 1,300,000 acres of national forest system land in eastern Washington were considered in need of treatments to restore forest health and reduce the risk of wildfire hazard potential. Many of these lands are adjacent to populated communities, private lands, and state trust lands.

(14) In 2020, 166,000 acres of department of natural resources' land and 74,000 acres of other state-owned lands in eastern Washington were in need of forest health treatment. These forestlands provide critical fish and wildlife habitat, natural and cultural resources, recreation, raw materials for the forest industry, and funding for counties and schools. From 2011-2020, 102,700 forested acres of department of natural resources' managed trust lands have burned.

(15) Tribal lands and communities have been significantly impacted by wildfires and unhealthy forests. Approximately 494,000 acres of tribal lands in eastern Washington need forest health treatments. These forestlands provide critical fish and wildlife habitat, natural and cultural resources, and economic opportunities.

(16) Washington state has nearly eight million acres of private forestlands. Forested acres are declining statewide with a loss of 394,000 acres between 2007 and 2019. Small forestland owners account for 15 percent of total forest acres. Small forestland owner forested acres declined 3.7 percent from 2,990,000 acres in 2007 to 2,880,000 million acres in 2019. The number of small forestland owners increased 8.5 percent from 201,000 in 2007 to 218,000 in 2019. The number of small forestland owner parcels increased 2.1 percent from 256,500 to 261,800. This rapid land use change creates significant challenges for implementing forest health and wildfire response actions in the wildland urban interface. In eastern Washington alone, approximately 288,000 acres owned by small forestland owners are in need of immediate forest health treatment. These forestlands provide critical raw materials for the forest industry, rural economic opportunities, fish and wildlife habitat, cultural resources, and recreation. A coordinated interagency response is needed to address the multifaceted challenge posed by increasing parcelization, forest fragmentation, loss of economic viability, and changes in landowner assistance needs.

(17) The legislature finds that increasing the pace and scale of science-based forest health activities to reduce hazardous fuels and restore fire resilient forests, including through mechanical thinning and prescribed burning, on federal, state, tribal, and private lands, will reduce the risk and severity of wildfires, protect cultural and

archaeological resources, improve fish and wildlife habitat, expand recreational opportunities, protect air and water quality, create rural economic opportunities, provide critical wood products, and increase long-term carbon sequestration on our natural resource lands.

(18) Increased development in the wildland urban interface has also increased the number of people living in areas that are at risk of wildfire. In Washington, over 2,000,000 homes are currently at risk of wildfire. Communities and homeowners can take actions that reduce the risk of loss in the event of wildfire including, but not limited to, home hardening, creating defensible space, and building potential control lines or strategic fuel breaks.

(19) Long-term, sustainable investment in wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience is of utmost importance to the health and safety of our environment, our economy, our communities, and the well-being of every resident.

(20) It is the intent of the legislature to take immediate action to fully fund the wildland fire protection 10-year strategic plan. Strategies to accomplish these goals include, but are not limited to:

(a) Upgrading our capability to attack wildfires with critical air and ground resources;

(b) Providing needed wildfire resources to state wildfire response and local fire service districts;

(c) Working with each state utility, local publicly owned electric utility, and electrical cooperative to reduce wildfire risk and develop consistent approaches and shared data related to fire prevention, safety, vegetation management, and energy distribution systems; and

(d) Improving wildfire detection in areas at risk of wildfire through new technologies and equipment.

(21) Furthermore, it is the intent of the legislature to take immediate action to increase the pace and scale of forest management across different land ownerships and fully fund the 20-year forest health strategic plan and activities developed to facilitate implementation of the Washington state forest action plan. Strategies to accomplish these goals include, but are not limited to:

(a) Restoring to health a minimum of 1,250,000 acres of forestland in need of immediate action to become more resilient and improve watershed health;

(b) Increasing prescribed fire and other fuel reduction projects through proven forestry practices and the operation of prescribed fire crews;

(c) Establishing potential control lines and strategic fuel breaks around communities with high wildfire risk;

(d) Increasing funding for the small forestland owner office for technical assistance and support for small forestland owners and funding an integrated small forestland owner forest health program in support of extending management and control of wildfire from homes through the wildland urban interface to small forestland owner holdings; and

(e) Monitoring forest health conditions and effectiveness of treatments throughout the state, including ecological function and reducing catastrophic wildfires.

(22) Furthermore, it is the intent of the legislature to take immediate action to help communities become more resilient to wildfire. Strategies to accomplish these goals include, but are not limited to:

(a) Increasing funding for cost share programs for home hardening, fuels reduction, and community resilience programs in communities at risk of wildfire;

(b) Reducing wildfire risk to wildland urban interfaces; and

(c) Ensuring our state's most vulnerable populations are not disproportionately burdened by the impact and consequences of wildfire.

(23) The legislature intends to provide \$125,000,000 per biennium over the next four biennia for a total of \$500,000,000 and that these investments will help protect the state's people, environment, and economy. [2021 c 298 s 1.]

Short title—2021 c 298: "This act may be known and cited as the wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience act." [2021 c 298 s 11.]

RCW 76.04.511 Wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account. (1) The wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account is created in the state treasury. All receipts from moneys directed to the account must be deposited in the account. Moneys in the account may be spent only after appropriation. Expenditures from the account may be used only for carrying out the purposes of chapter 298, Laws of 2021 and for no other purposes.

(2) Expenditures from the account may be made to state agencies, federally recognized tribes, local governments, fire and conservation districts, nonprofit organizations, forest collaboratives, and small forestland owners, consistent with the 20-year forest health strategic plan, the wildland fire protection 10-year strategic plan, and the Washington state forest action plan.

(3) The wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account may only be used to monitor, track, and implement the following purposes:

(a) Fire preparedness activities consistent with the goals contained in the state's wildland fire protection 10-year strategic plan including, but not limited to, funding for firefighting capacity and investments in ground and aerial firefighting resources, equipment, and technology, and the development and implementation of a wildland fire aviation support plan in order to expand and improve the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the department's wildland fire aviation program;

(b) Fire prevention activities to restore and improve forest health and reduce vulnerability to drought, insect infestation, disease, and other threats to healthy forests including, but not limited to, silvicultural treatments, seedling development, thinning and prescribed fire, and postfire recovery activities to stabilize and prevent unacceptable degradation to natural and cultural resources and minimize threats to life and property resulting from the effects of a wildfire. Funding priority under this subsection must be given to programs, activities, or projects aligned with the 20-year forest health strategic plan, the wildland fire protection 10-year strategic plan, and the Washington state forest action plan across any combination of local, state, federal, tribal, and private ownerships;

(c) Fire protection activities for homes, properties, communities, and values at risk including, but not limited to:

Potential control lines or strategic fuel breaks in forests and rangelands near communities; improved warning and communications systems to prepare for wildfires; increased engagement with non-English-speaking communities in their home language for community preparedness; and the national fire protection association's fire wise USA and the fire-adapted communities network programs to help communities take action before wildfires;

(d) During the 2025-2027 fiscal biennium, activities related to postwildland fire response including postwildfire debris flow monitoring.

(4) Appropriations for forest health activities funded by the wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account shall not be less than 25 percent of the biennial appropriated funding.

(5) Appropriations for community resilience activities funded by the wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account shall not be less than 15 percent of the biennial appropriated funding.

(6) Funding may not be used for emergency fire costs or suppression costs as defined in RCW 76.04.005.

(7) To the maximum extent possible, workforce development investments from the wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account should prioritize historically marginalized, underrepresented, rural, and low-income communities.

(8) Any expenditures from the wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account for forest health treatments on federal lands must be additive to the baseline accomplishments and outputs already funded through the federal government and outlined in the annual work plans of the United States forest service, bureau of land management, the national park service, and/or the United States fish and wildlife service.

(9) The department may solicit the forest health advisory committee established in RCW 76.06.200 and wildland fire advisory committee established in RCW 76.04.179 to provide recommendations for investments under this section. In assessing investments and developing recommendations for communities that will be impacted based on ecological, public infrastructure, and life safety needs as set forth in the 20-year forest health strategic plan and the wildland fire protection 10-year strategic plan, the forest health advisory committee and wildland fire advisory committee must use environmental justice or equity focused tools, such as the Washington tracking network's environmental health disparities tool to identify highly impacted communities. This identification must be used as a factor in determining recommendations for investments under this section. "Highly impacted communities" has the same meaning as defined in RCW 19.405.020.

(10) To the maximum extent practicable and where consistent with the 20-year forest health strategic plan, the wildland fire protection 10-year strategic plan, or the Washington state forest action plan and landowner objectives, forest health treatments funded through the wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account shall seek to utilize the value of any merchantable materials to help offset treatment costs. [2025 c 424 s 983; 2021 c 298 s 2.]

Effective date—2025 c 424: See note following RCW 9.46.100.

Short title—2021 c 298: See note following RCW 76.04.505.

RCW 76.04.516 Report to the governor and legislature—Forest inventory—Forest growth and yield modeling—Sustainable harvest calculation—Review—Report. (1) By December 1st of each even-numbered year, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the department must report to the governor and legislature on the following:

(a) The type and amount of the expenditures made, by fiscal year, and for what purpose, from the wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account created in RCW 76.04.511 and from expenditures made from the general fund for implementation of chapter 297, Laws of 2022;

(b) The amount of unexpended and unobligated funds in the wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account and recommendations for the disbursement to local districts;

(c) Progress on implementation of the wildland fire protection 10-year strategic plan including, but not limited to, how investments are reducing human-caused wildfire starts, lowering the size and scale and geography of catastrophic wildfires, reducing the communities, landscapes, and population at risk, and creating resilient landscapes and communities;

(d) Progress on implementation of the 20-year forest health strategic plan as established through the forest health assessment and treatment framework pursuant to RCW 76.06.200 including, but not limited to: Assessment of fire prone lands and communities that are in need of forest health treatments; forest health treatments prioritized and conducted by landowner type, geography, and risk level; estimated value of any merchantable materials from forest health treatments; and number of acres treated by treatment type, including the use of prescribed fire;

(e) Progress on developing markets for forest residuals and biomass generated from forest health treatments.

(2) The department must include recommendations on any adjustments that may be necessary or advisable to the mechanism of funding dispensation as created under chapter 298, Laws of 2021.

(3) The report required in this section should support existing department assessments pursuant to RCW 79.10.530 and 76.06.200.

(4)(a)(i) Prior to the determination of the 2025-2034 sustainable harvest calculation as required by RCW 79.10.320, the department must hire an independent third-party contractor to assist it in updating its forest inventory by increasing the intensity of forest sample plots on all forestlands over the next two biennium. The department's sustainable harvest calculation technical advisory committee must be involved in the design, development, and implementation of this forest inventory update.

(ii) For purposes of this subsection, "forest inventory" means the collection of sample data to estimate a range of forest attributes including, but not limited to, standing volume, stored carbon, habitat attributes, age classes, tree species, and other inventory attributes, including information needed to estimate rates of tree growth and associated carbon sequestration on department lands.

(iii) The department's sustainable harvest calculation technical advisory committee must bring forward recommendations for regular maintenance and updates to the forest inventory on a ten-year basis.

(b) Prior to the determination of the 2025-2034 sustainable harvest calculation as required by RCW 79.10.320, the department must hire a third-party contractor to review, analyze, and advise the department's forest growth and yield modeling, specific to all types of forested acres managed by the department. The department's sustainable harvest calculation technical advisory committee must be involved in the design, review, and analysis of the department's forest growth and yield modeling.

(c) Prior to the determination of the 2025-2034 sustainable harvest calculation as required by RCW 79.10.320, the joint legislative audit and review committee established in chapter 44.28 RCW must oversee and conduct an independent review of the methodologies and data being utilized by the department in the development of the sustainable harvest calculation, including the associated forest inventory, forest growth, harvest and yield data, and modeling techniques that impact harvest levels. In carrying out the review, the joint legislative audit and review committee shall:

(i) Retain one or more contractors with expertise in forest inventories, forest growth and yield modeling, and operational research modeling in forest harvest scheduling to conduct the technical review;

(ii) Be a member of department's sustainable harvest calculation technical advisory committee, along with one of its contractors selected in (c)(i) of this subsection; and

(iii) Prior to the department's determination of the sustainable harvest calculation under RCW 79.10.320, ensure that a completed independent review and report with findings and recommendations is submitted to the board of natural resources and the legislature.

(d) Upon receiving the report from the joint legislative audit and review committee required under (c)(iii) of this subsection, the board of natural resources shall determine whether modifications are necessary to the sustainable harvest calculation prior to approving harvest level under RCW 79.10.320. [2025 c 198 s 3; 2022 c 297 s 967; 2021 c 298 s 3.]

Effective date—2022 c 297: See note following RCW 43.79.565.

Short title—2021 c 298: See note following RCW 76.04.505.

RCW 76.04.521 Forest sector workforce development. (1) The legislature finds that satisfying the goals identified in RCW 76.04.505 to increase the pace and scale of forest health treatments and improve wildfire prevention and response requires increasing the workforce that is needed to perform this critical work. This need creates an opportunity to develop employment and career pathways across the state, including in rural communities throughout Washington. Investments to support and further develop the forest sector workforce are recommended in both the department's 2019 "plan for climate resilience" and the department of commerce's 2020 report "Washington's green economy."

(2) The department and the department of commerce shall jointly develop and implement, as appropriate and in consultation with centers of excellence, higher education, secondary education, and workforce development centers, initiatives to develop a forest health workforce

necessary to implement the goals of this section. Initiatives may include, but are not limited to:

(a) Creating a new or making an existing grant program available to nonprofits, labor organizations, state agencies, community and technical colleges, institutions of higher education, private sector employers, skills [skill] centers, or other training and education institutions that have qualifications and experience in the development of training programs, such as secondary and postsecondary courses, relevant to the workforce needs of the forest sector. Grants must be awarded on a competitive basis with priority funding for programs that meet urgent forest health and wildfire suppression skills gaps and demonstrate a lack of available workforce in underserved communities. Grants awarded may be used for activities such as internships, Washington state registered apprenticeship programs, recognized preapprenticeships, career launch, and other relevant career connect Washington activities, and postsecondary bridge programs for forest sector or skill relevant trades that provide:

- (i) On the job training;
- (ii) Hard and soft skills development;
- (iii) Test preparation for trade apprenticeship;
- (iv) Advanced training in the forest sector relating to jobs such as: Hand crews; wildland firefighters; fire safety; equipment operators; timber operators; mill workers; mill or forestry technicians; mechanics; loggers; timber fallers; commercial truck drivers; foresters; ecologists; biologists; or other workforce needs in support of forest restoration and wildfire response;

(b) Developing education programs for elementary, secondary, and higher education students that: (i) Inform people about the role of forestry, fire, vegetation management, and ecological restoration; (ii) increase the awareness of opportunities for careers in the forest sector and exposure of students to those careers through various work-based learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom; (iii) connect students in pathways to careers in the forest sector; and (iv) incorporate opportunities for secondary students to earn industry recognized credentials and dual credit in career and technical education courses;

(c) Developing regional education, industry, and workforce development collaborations, including recruiting and building industry awareness and coordinating candidate development particularly in areas that are traditionally underrepresented in natural resource industries and specifically in forestry;

(d) Building additional statewide response. The department shall develop a recruiting and outreach program across the state to encourage people to volunteer with their local fire departments. The department shall expand existing training programs to meet increased interest and need in wildfire response and forest health work; and

(e) Developing a program to train local building and construction trade members and contractors to be deployed during periods requiring surge capacity for wildland fire suppression including:

- (i) As wildland firefighters who meet the requirements of being utilized by the department; and

- (ii) As heavy equipment operators who meet the requirements to be utilized by the department as required by RCW 76.04.181.

(3) The commissioner and the director of the department of commerce must direct their staff to develop a plan for tracking, maintaining, and publicly reporting on the following:

(a) A working definition of the forest sector workforce, including the job skills, certifications, and experience required;

(b) Recommendations for the training, recruitment, and retention of the current and anticipated forest sector workforce necessary to implement the goals of chapter 298, Laws of 2021;

(c) The identification of gaps and barriers to a full forest sector workforce pool, including:

(i) Estimates of forest sector workforce jobs created and retained as well as any reductions in the forest sector workforce;

(ii) An estimate of the number of needed private contractors to implement the goals of chapter 298, Laws of 2021, an inventory of local and regional private contractors trained to carry out wildfire response and forest health work, and a list of local private contractors utilized annually for wildfire response and forest health work; and

(iii) An inventory of existing training facilities and programs that support ongoing and anticipated forest sector, or related sectors, as identified in subsection (2)(a)(iv) of this section;

(d) Recommendations for addressing identified barriers or other needs to otherwise continue the development of a forest workforce necessary to implement the goals of chapter 298, Laws of 2021.

(4) The department and the department of corrections shall jointly develop opportunities to expand existing programs to provide the additional wildfire, forest health, and silvicultural capacity necessary to implement the goals of chapter 298, Laws of 2021, including a postrelease program that helps formerly incarcerated individuals who served on state fire response crews obtain employment in wildfire suppression and forest management.

(5) The department shall utilize existing programs such as the Washington conservation corps, Washington veterans corps, Washington service corps, customized and on-the-job training, or similar programs to expand opportunities and promote family wage careers in the forest sector workforce.

(6) To the maximum extent possible, workforce development programs and policies should prioritize historically marginalized, underrepresented, rural, and low-income communities.

(7) The department and the department of commerce, working with the forest health advisory committee, must assist forestland owners and forest products companies grow existing and develop new market opportunities for the utilization of material produced as a result of forest health treatments funded through the wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account to improve the economic benefit of the treatments while increasing the speed, efficiency, and impact of forest restoration on the landscape. [2021 c 298 s 5.]

Short title—2021 c 298: See note following RCW 76.04.505.

RCW 76.04.525 Wildland fire aviation support plan. The department must develop and implement a wildland fire aviation support plan, as recommended by the wildland fire protection 10-year strategic plan, in order to expand and improve the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the department's wildland fire aviation program. The wildland fire aviation support plan must include:

(1) Recommendations for the addition of air assets in order for the department to increase its initial attack capability and maintain

and improve on the department's ability to manage fires to meet 10-year wildland fire protection and 20-year forest health strategic plan goals;

(2) Development of a next-generation rotor wing platform strategy to ensure the availability and use of the latest firefighting aviation technology and provide a path for either the upgrade or replacement, or both, of the department's legacy aircraft;

(3) Evaluation of opportunities to increase the use of contract air assets;

(4) Evaluation of costs and benefits to increase dedicated air resources during peak fire season when there may be limited available supply due to wildfire activity in other states; and

(5) Strategies to upgrade retardant loading and processing infrastructure to improve tanker turnaround time, including support for development of infrastructure to accommodate very large air tankers, at a port with an international airport within a county east of the crest of the Cascade mountains that does not share a border with another state. [2021 c 298 s 8.]

Short title—2021 c 298: See note following RCW 76.04.505.

ASSESSMENTS, OBLIGATIONS, FUNDS

RCW 76.04.600 Owners to protect forests. Every owner of forestland in the state of Washington shall furnish or provide, during the season of the year when there is danger of forest fires, adequate protection against the spread of fire thereon or therefrom which shall meet with the approval of the department. [1986 c 100 s 34.]

RCW 76.04.610 Forest fire protection assessment. (1)(a) If any owner of forestland within a forest protection zone neglects or fails to provide adequate fire protection as required by RCW 76.04.600, the department shall provide such protection and shall annually impose the following assessments on each parcel of such land: (i) A flat fee assessment of seventeen dollars and fifty cents; and (ii) twenty-seven cents on each acre exceeding fifty acres.

(b) Assessors may, at their option, collect the assessment on tax exempt lands. If the assessor elects not to collect the assessment, the department may bill the landowner directly.

(2) An owner who has paid assessments on two or more parcels, each containing fewer than fifty acres and each within the same county, may obtain the following refund:

(a) If all the parcels together contain less than fifty acres, then the refund is equal to the flat fee assessments paid, reduced by the total of (i) seventeen dollars and (ii) the total of the amounts retained by the county from such assessments under subsection (5) of this section.

(b) If all the parcels together contain fifty or more acres, then the refund is equal to the flat fee assessments paid, reduced by the total of (i) seventeen dollars, (ii) twenty-seven cents for each acre exceeding fifty acres, and (iii) the total of the amounts retained by the county from such assessments under subsection (5) of this section.

Applications for refunds shall be submitted to the department on a form prescribed by the department and in the same year in which the assessments were paid. The department may not provide refunds to applicants who do not provide verification that all assessments and property taxes on the property have been paid. Applications may be made by mail.

In addition to the procedures under this subsection, property owners with multiple parcels in a single county who qualify for a refund under this section may apply to the department on an application listing all the parcels owned in order to have the assessment computed on all parcels but billed to a single parcel. Property owners with the following number of parcels may apply to the department in the year indicated:

Year	Number of Parcels
2002	10 or more parcels
2003	8 or more parcels
2004 and thereafter	6 or more parcels

The department must compute the correct assessment and allocate one parcel in the county to use to collect the assessment. The county must then bill the forest fire protection assessment on that one allocated identified parcel. The landowner is responsible for notifying the department of any changes in parcel ownership.

(3) Beginning January 1, 1991, under the administration and at the discretion of the department up to two hundred thousand dollars per year of this assessment shall be used in support of those rural fire districts assisting the department in fire protection services on forestlands.

(4) For the purpose of this chapter, the department may divide the forestlands of the state, or any part thereof, into districts, for fire protection and assessment purposes, may classify lands according to the character of timber prevailing, and the fire hazard existing, and place unprotected lands under the administration of the proper district. Amounts paid or contracted to be paid by the department for protection of forestlands from funds at its disposal shall be a lien upon the property protected, unless reimbursed by the owner within ten days after October 1st of the year in which they were incurred. The department shall be prepared to make statement thereof, upon request, to a forest owner whose own protection has not been previously approved as to its adequacy, the department shall report the same to the assessor of the county in which the property is situated. The assessor shall extend the amounts upon the tax rolls covering the property, and upon authorization from the department shall levy the forest protection assessment against the amounts of unimproved land as shown in each ownership on the county assessor's records. The assessor may then segregate on the records to provide that the improved land and improvements thereon carry the millage levy designed to support the rural fire protection districts as provided for in RCW 52.16.170.

(5) The amounts assessed shall be collected at the time, in the same manner, by the same procedure, and with the same penalties attached that general state and county taxes on the same property are collected, except that errors in assessments may be corrected at any time by the department certifying them to the treasurer of the county in which the land involved is situated. Assessments shall be known and designated as assessments of the year in which the amounts became reimbursable. Upon the collection of assessments the county treasurer

shall place fifty cents of the total assessments paid on a parcel for fire protection into the county current expense fund to defray the costs of listing, billing, and collecting these assessments. The treasurer shall then transmit the balance to the department. Collections shall be applied against expenses incurred in carrying out the provisions of this section, including necessary and reasonable administrative costs incurred by the department in the enforcement of these provisions. The department may also expend sums collected from owners of forestlands or received from any other source for necessary administrative costs in connection with the enforcement of RCW 76.04.660. During the 2017-2019 and 2019-2021 fiscal biennia, the legislature may appropriate moneys from the account for department of natural resources wildfire response and forest health activities.

(6) When land against which forest protection assessments are outstanding is acquired for delinquent taxes and sold at public auction, the state shall have a prior lien on the proceeds of sale over and above the amount necessary to satisfy the county's delinquent tax judgment. The county treasurer, in case the proceeds of sale exceed the amount of the delinquent tax judgment, shall immediately remit to the department the amount of the outstanding forest protection assessments.

(7) All nonfederal public bodies owning or administering forestland included in a forest protection zone shall pay the forest protection assessments provided in this section and the special forest fire suppression account assessments under RCW 76.04.630. The forest protection assessments and special forest fire suppression account assessments shall be payable by nonfederal public bodies from available funds within thirty days following receipt of the written notice from the department which is given after October 1st of the year in which the protection was provided. Unpaid assessments are not a lien against the nonfederal publicly owned land but shall constitute a debt by the nonfederal public body to the department and are subject to interest charges at the legal rate.

(8) A public body, having failed to previously pay the forest protection assessments required of it by this section, which fails to suppress a fire on or originating from forestlands owned or administered by it, is liable for the costs of suppression incurred by the department or its agent and is not entitled to reimbursement of costs incurred by the public body in the suppression activities.

(9) The department may adopt rules to implement this section, including, but not limited to, rules on levying and collecting forest protection assessments. [2019 c 415 s 981; 2018 c 299 s 912; 2012 2nd sp.s. c 7 s 922; 2007 c 110 s 1; 2004 c 216 s 1; 2001 c 279 s 2; 1993 c 36 s 1; 1989 c 362 s 1; 1988 c 273 s 3; 1986 c 100 s 35.]

Effective date—2019 c 415: See note following RCW 28B.20.476.

Effective date—2018 c 299: See note following RCW 43.41.433.

Effective date—2012 2nd sp.s. c 7: See note following RCW 2.68.020.

Effective date—1993 c 36: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect immediately [April 15, 1993]." [1993 c 36 s 3.]

RCW 76.04.620 State funds—Loans—Recovery of funds from the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account. Biennial general fund appropriations to the department of natural resources normally provide funds for the purpose of paying the emergency fire costs and expenses incurred and/or approved by the department in forest fire suppression or in reacting to any potential forest fire situation. When a determination is made that the fire started in the course of or as a result of a landowner operation, moneys expended from such appropriations in the suppression of the fire shall be recovered from the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account. The department shall transmit to the state treasurer for deposit in the general fund any such moneys which are later recovered. Moneys recovered during the biennium in which they are expended may be spent for purposes set forth in this section during the same biennium, without reappropriation. Loans between the general fund and the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account are authorized for emergency fire suppression. The loans shall not exceed the amount appropriated for emergency forest fire suppression costs and shall bear interest at the then current rate of interest as determined by the state treasurer. [1986 c 100 s 36.]

RCW 76.04.630 Landowner contingency forest fire suppression account—Expenditures—Assessments. There is created a landowner contingency forest fire suppression account in the state treasury. Moneys in the account may be spent only as provided in this section. Disbursements from the account shall be on authorization of the commissioner of public lands or the commissioner's designee. The account is subject to the allotment procedure provided under chapter 43.88 RCW, but no appropriation is required for disbursements.

The department may expend from this account the amounts as may be available and as it considers appropriate for the payment of emergency fire costs resulting from a participating landowner fire. The department may, when moneys are available from the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account, expend moneys for summarily abating, isolating, or reducing an extreme fire hazard under RCW 76.04.660. All moneys recovered as a result of the department's actions, from the owner or person responsible, under RCW 76.04.660 shall be deposited in the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account.

When a determination is made that the fire was started by other than a landowner operation, moneys expended from this account in the suppression of such fire shall be recovered from the general fund appropriations as may be available for emergency fire suppression costs. The department shall deposit in the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account moneys paid out of the account which are later recovered, less reasonable costs of recovery.

This account shall be established and renewed by an annual special forest fire suppression account assessment paid by participating landowners at a rate to be established by the department. In establishing assessments, the department shall seek to establish and thereafter reestablish a balance in the account of three million dollars. The department may establish a flat fee assessment of no more than seven dollars and fifty cents for participating landowners owning parcels of fifty acres or less. For participating landowners owning parcels larger than fifty acres, the department may

charge the flat fee assessment plus a per acre assessment for every acre over fifty acres. The per acre assessment established by the department may not exceed fifteen cents per acre per year. The assessments may differ to equitably distribute the assessment based on emergency fire suppression cost experience necessitated by landowner operations. Amounts assessed for this account shall be a lien upon the forestlands with respect to which the assessment is made and may be collected as directed by the department in the same manner as forest protection assessments. Payment of emergency costs from this account shall in no way restrict the right of the department to recover costs pursuant to RCW 76.04.495 or other laws.

When the department determines that a forest fire was started in the course of or as a result of a landowner operation, the determination shall be final, unless, within ninety days of the notification, or an interested party serves a request for a hearing before the department. The hearing shall constitute an adjudicative proceeding under chapter 34.05 RCW, the administrative procedure act, and an appeal shall be in accordance with RCW 34.05.510 through 34.05.598. [2010 1st sp.s. c 7 s 129; 1993 c 36 s 2; 1991 sp.s. c 13 s 31. Prior: 1989 c 362 s 2; 1989 c 175 s 162; 1986 c 100 s 37.]

Effective date—2010 1st sp.s. c 26; 2010 1st sp.s. c 7: See note following RCW 43.03.027.

Effective date—1993 c 36: See note following RCW 76.04.610.

Effective dates—Severability—1991 sp.s. c 13: See notes following RCW 18.08.240.

Effective date—1989 c 175: See note following RCW 34.05.010.

HAZARD ABATEMENT

RCW 76.04.650 Disposal of forest debris—Permission to allow trees to fall on another's land. Everyone clearing land or clearing right-of-way for railroad, public highway, private road, ditch, dike, pipe or wire line, or for any other transmission, or transportation utility right-of-way, shall pile and burn or dispose of by other satisfactory means, all forest debris cut thereon, as rapidly as the clearing or cutting progresses, or at such other times as the department may specify, and if during the closed season, in compliance with the law requiring burning permits.

No person clearing any land or right-of-way, or in cutting or logging timber for any purpose, may fell, or permit to be felled, any trees so that they may fall onto land owned by another without first obtaining permission from the owner in addition to complying with the terms of this section for the disposal of refuse. All the terms of this section and other forest laws of the state shall be observed in all clearings of right-of-way or other land on behalf of the state itself or any county thereof, either directly or by contract, and, unless unavoidable emergency prevents, provision shall be made by all officials directing the work for withholding a sufficient portion of the payment therefor until the disposal is completed, to insure the

completion of the disposal in compliance with this section. [1986 c 100 s 38.]

RCW 76.04.660 Additional fire hazards—Extreme fire hazard areas—Abatement, isolation or reduction—Summary action—Recovery of costs—Inspection of property.

(1) The owner of land on which there is an additional fire hazard, when the hazard is the result of a landowner operation or the land is within an area covered by a forest health hazard warning issued under RCW 76.06.180, shall take reasonable measures to reduce the danger of fire spreading from the area and may abate the hazard by burning or other satisfactory means.

(2) An extreme fire hazard shall exist within areas covered by a forest health hazard order issued by the commissioner of public lands under RCW 76.06.180 in which there is an additional fire hazard caused by disturbance agents and the landowner has failed to take such action as required by the forest health hazard order. The duties and liability of such landowner under this chapter are as described in subsections (5), (6), and (7) of this section.

(3) The department shall adopt rules defining areas of extreme fire hazard that the owner and person responsible shall abate. The areas shall include but are not limited to high risk areas such as where life or buildings may be endangered, areas adjacent to public highways, and areas of frequent public use.

(4) The department may adopt rules defining other conditions of extreme fire hazard with a high potential for fire spreading to lands in other ownerships. The department may prescribe additional measures that shall be taken by the owner and person responsible to isolate or reduce the extreme fire hazard.

(5) The owner or person responsible for the existence of the extreme fire hazard is required to abate, isolate, or reduce the hazard. The duty to abate, isolate, or reduce, and liability under this chapter, arise upon creation of the extreme fire hazard. Liability shall include but not be limited to all fire suppression expenses incurred by the department, regardless of fire cause.

(6) If the owner or person responsible for the existence of the extreme fire hazard or forest debris subject to RCW 76.04.650 refuses, neglects, or unsuccessfully attempts to abate, isolate, or reduce the same, the department may summarily abate, isolate, or reduce the hazard as required by this chapter and recover twice the actual cost thereof from the owner or person responsible. Landowner contingency forest fire suppression account moneys may be used by the department, when available, for this purpose. Moneys recovered by the department pursuant to this section shall be returned to the landowner contingency forest fire suppression account.

(7) Such costs shall include all salaries and expenses of people and equipment incurred therein, including those of the department. All such costs shall also be a lien upon the land enforceable in the same manner with the same effect as a mechanic's lien.

(8) The summary action may be taken only after ten days' notice in writing has been given to the owner or reputed owner of the land on which the extreme fire hazard or forest debris subject to RCW 76.04.650 exists. The notice shall include a suggested method of abatement and estimated cost thereof. The notice shall be by personal service or by registered or certified mail addressed to the owner or reputed owner at the owner's last known place of residence.

(9) A landowner or manager may make a written request to the department to inspect their property and provide a written notice that they have complied with a forest health hazard warning or forest health hazard order, or otherwise adequately abated, isolated, or reduced an additional or extreme fire hazard. An additional or extreme fire hazard shall be considered to continue to exist unless and until the department, in its sole discretion, issues such notice. [2010 1st sp.s. c 7 s 130; 2007 c 480 s 13; 1986 c 100 s 39.]

Effective date—2010 1st sp.s. c 26; 2010 1st sp.s. c 7: See note following RCW 43.03.027.

FIRE REGULATION

RCW 76.04.700 Failure to extinguish campfire. It is unlawful for any person to start any fire upon any camping ground and upon leaving the camping ground fail to extinguish the fire. [1986 c 100 s 40.]

RCW 76.04.710 Wilful setting of fire. It is unlawful for any person to wilfully start a fire, whether on his or her land or the land of another, whereby forestlands or the property of another is endangered, under circumstances not amounting to arson in either the first or second degree or reckless burning in either the first or second degree. [1986 c 100 s 41.]

RCW 76.04.720 Removal of notices. It is unlawful for any person to wilfully and without authorization deface or remove any warning notice posted under the requirements of this chapter. [1986 c 100 s 42.]

RCW 76.04.730 Negligent fire—Spread. It is unlawful for any person to negligently allow fire originating on the person's own property to spread to the property of another. [1986 c 100 s 43.]

RCW 76.04.740 Reckless burning. (1) It is unlawful to knowingly cause a fire or explosion and thereby place forestlands in danger of destruction or damage.

(2) This section does not apply to acts amounting to reckless burning in the first degree under RCW 9A.48.040.

(3) Terms used in this section shall have the meanings given to them in Title 9A RCW.

(4) A violation of this section shall be punished as a gross misdemeanor under RCW 9A.20.021. [1986 c 100 s 44.]

RCW 76.04.750 Uncontrolled fire a public nuisance—Suppression—Duties—Summary action—Recovery of costs. Any fire on or threatening any forestland burning uncontrolled and without proper action being taken to prevent its spread, notwithstanding the origin of the fire,

is a public nuisance by reason of its menace to life and property. Any person engaged in any activity on such lands, having knowledge of the fire, notwithstanding the origin or subsequent spread thereof on his or her own or other forestlands, and the landowner, shall make every reasonable effort to suppress the fire. If the person has not suppressed the fire and the fire is on or threatening forestland within a forest protection zone, the department shall summarily suppress the fire. If the owner, lessee, other possessor of such land, or an agent or contractor of the owner, lessee, or possessor, having knowledge of the fire, has not made a reasonable effort to suppress the fire, the cost thereof may be recovered from the owner, lessee, or other possessor of the land and the cost of the work shall also constitute a lien upon the real property or chattels under the person's ownership. The lien may be filed by the department in the office of the county auditor and foreclosed in the same manner provided by law for the foreclosure of mechanics' liens. The prosecuting attorney shall bring the action to recover the cost or foreclose the lien, upon the request of the department. In the absence of negligence, no costs, other than those provided in RCW 76.04.475, shall be recovered from any landowner for lands subject to the forest protection assessment with respect to the land on which the fire burns.

When a fire occurs in a land clearing, right-of-way clearing, or landowner operation it shall be fought to the full limit of the available employees and equipment, and the firefighting shall be continued with the necessary crews and equipment in such numbers as are, in the opinion of the department, sufficient to suppress the fire. The fire shall not be left without a firefighting crew or fire patrol until authority has been granted in writing by the department. [1988 c 273 s 4; 1986 c 100 s 45.]

RCW 76.04.760 Civil actions—Forested lands—Fire damage. (1)

The owner of public or private forested lands may bring a civil action in superior court for property damage to public or private forested lands, including real and personal property on those lands, when the damage results from a fire that started on or spread from public or private forested lands.

(2) Liability under this section attaches to the extent that evidence demonstrates that:

(a) An action or inaction by a person relating to the start or spread of the fire from public or private forested lands constituted negligence or a higher degree of fault; and

(b) The action or inaction under (a) of this subsection was a proximate cause of the property damage.

(3) Recoverable damages under this section are limited to:

(a) Either: (i) The difference in the fair market value of the damaged property immediately before and after the fire. For real property, the state-certified general real estate appraiser must identify and analyze all relevant characteristics and uses of the property including cultural, recreational, and environmental characteristics and uses, to the extent such characteristics or uses contribute to the fair market value of the property based on the highest and best use of the property. The state-certified general real estate appraiser shall expressly address the assumptions and conditions used to evaluate such characteristics and uses, consistent

with standards of professional appraisal practice adopted under chapter 18.140 RCW; or (ii) the reasonable cost of restoring the damaged property to the general condition it was in immediately before the fire, to the extent permitted by Washington law;

(b) The reasonable expenses incurred to suppress or extinguish the fire unless otherwise provided for in this chapter;

(c) Any other objectively verifiable monetary loss, that is not duplicative of the recovery specified under (a) or (b) of this subsection including, but not limited to: Out-of-pocket expenses; loss of earnings; loss of use of property; or loss of business or employment opportunities; and

(d) In actions brought by an Indian tribe for recovery of damages from injury to archaeological objects, archaeological sites, or historic archaeological resources, damages as measured in accordance with WAC 25-48-043 as it existed on June 12, 2014.

(4) This section provides the exclusive cause of action for property damage to public or private forested lands, including real and personal property on those lands, resulting from a fire that started on or spread from public or private forested lands.

(5) The definitions in this subsection only apply throughout this section relating to the specification of damages for fire damage to public and private forested lands, unless the context clearly requires otherwise, and do not apply to and are not intended as a source for interpretation of other sections of this chapter.

(a) "Fair market value" means the amount that a willing buyer would pay to a willing seller for property in an arms-length transaction if both parties were fully informed about all advantages and disadvantages of the property and neither party is acting under a compulsion to sell, as determined by: (i) For real property, a state-certified general real estate appraiser as defined under RCW 18.140.010; and (ii) for personal property, an appraiser qualified to appraise the property based on training and experience. For real property, the state-certified general real estate appraiser must identify and analyze all relevant characteristics and uses of the property including cultural, recreational, and environmental characteristics and uses, to the extent such characteristics or uses contribute to the fair market value of the property based on the highest and best use of the property. The state-certified general real estate appraiser shall expressly address the assumptions and conditions used to evaluate such characteristics and uses, consistent with standards of professional appraisal practice adopted under chapter 18.140 RCW.

(b) "Forest tree species" means a tree species that is capable of producing logs, fiber, or other wood materials that are suitable for the production of lumber, sheeting, pulp, firewood, or other forest products.

(c) "Owner of public or private forested lands" means any person in actual control of public or private forested lands, whether the control is based either on legal or equitable title, or on any other interest entitling the holder to sell or otherwise dispose of any or all of the timber on the land in any manner.

(d) "Person" includes: An individual; a corporation; a public or private entity or organization; a local, state, or federal government or governmental entity; any business organization, including corporations and partnerships; or a group of two or more individuals acting with a common purpose.

(e) "Public or private forested lands" means any lands used or biologically capable of being used for growing forest tree species regardless of the existing use of the land except when the predominant physical use of the land at the time of the fire is not consistent with the growing, conservation, or preservation of forest tree species. Examples of inconsistent uses include, but are not limited to, buildings, airports, parking lots, mining, solid waste disposal, cropfields, orchards, vineyards, pastures, feedlots, communication sites, and home sites that may include up to ten acres. Public or private forested lands do not include state highways, county roads, railroad rights-of-way, and utility rights-of-way that cross over, under, or through such lands. [2014 c 81 s 1.]

Authority of chapter—2014 c 81: "This act does not: Affect or preclude any action relating to the imposition of criminal or civil penalties as authorized by law; affect or preclude the recovery of fire suppression costs as authorized under chapter 76.04 RCW; affect or preclude an action under RCW 4.24.630 against a person who goes onto the land of another without authorization and wrongfully, intentionally, and unreasonably causes a fire resulting in property damage; affect or preclude an action under chapter 27.44 or 27.53 RCW; or affect the provisions of RCW 76.04.016." [2014 c 81 s 4.]

Application—2014 c 81: "This act applies prospectively only and not retroactively. It applies only to causes of action that arise on or after June 12, 2014." [2014 c 81 s 5.]

RCW 76.04.770 Authorization to enter privately or publicly owned land to extinguish or control a wildland fire—Limitation of liability. (1)(a) An individual may, consistent with this section, enter privately owned or publicly owned land for the purposes of attempting to extinguish or control a wildland fire, regardless of whether the individual owns the land, when fighting the wildland fire in that particular time and location can be reasonably considered a public necessity due to an imminent danger.

(b) No civil or criminal liability may be imposed by any court on an individual acting pursuant to this section for any direct or proximate adverse impacts resulting from an individual's access to land for the purposes of attempting to extinguish or control a wildland fire when fighting the wildland fire in that particular time and location can be reasonably considered a public necessity, except upon proof of gross negligence or willful or wanton misconduct by the individual.

(c) An individual may enter land under this subsection (1) only if:

- (i) There is an active fire on or in near proximity to the land;
- (ii) The individual has a reasonable belief that the local fire conditions are creating an emergency situation and that there is an imminent danger of a fire growing or spreading to or from the parcel of land being entered;
- (iii) The individual has a reasonable belief that preventive measures will extinguish or control the wildfire;
- (iv) The individual has a reasonable belief that he or she is capable of taking preventive measures;

(v) The individual only undertakes measures that are reasonable and necessary until professional wildfire suppression personnel arrives;

(vi) The individual does not continue to take suppression actions after specific direction to cease from the landowner;

(vii) The individual takes preventive measures only for the period of time until efforts to control the wildfire have been assumed by professional wildfire suppression personnel, unless explicitly authorized by professional wildland firefighting personnel to remain engaged in suppressing the fire;

(viii) The individual follows the instructions of professional wildland firefighting personnel, including ceasing to engage in firefighting activities, when directed to do so by professional wildland firefighting personnel; and

(ix) The individual promptly notifies emergency personnel and the landowner, lessee, or occupant prior to entering the land or within a reasonable time after the individual attempts to extinguish or control the wildland fire.

(d) Nothing in this section authorizes any person to materially benefit from accessing land or retain any valuable materials that may be collected or harvested during the time the individual attempts to extinguish or control the wildland fire.

(e) (i) The authority to enter privately owned or publicly owned land under this subsection (1) is limited to the minimum necessary activities reasonably required to extinguish or control the wildland fire.

(ii) Activities that may be reasonable under this subsection (1) include, but are not limited to: Using hand tools to clear the ground of debris, operating readily available water hoses, clearing flammable materials from the vicinity of structures, unlocking or opening gates to assist firefighter access, and safely scouting and reporting fire behavior.

(iii) Activities that do not fall within the scope of this subsection (1)(e), due to the high potential for adverse consequences, include, but are not limited to: Lighting a fire in an attempt to stop the spread of another fire; using explosives as a firefighting technique; using aircraft for fire suppression; and directing other individuals to engage in firefighting.

(f) Nothing in this subsection (1) confers a legal or civil duty or obligation on a person to attempt to extinguish or control a wildfire.

(2) (a) No civil or criminal liability may be imposed by any court on the owner, lessee, or occupant of any land accessed as permitted under subsection (1) of this section for any direct or proximate adverse impacts resulting from the access to privately owned or publicly owned land allowed under subsection (1) of this section, except upon proof of willful or wanton misconduct by the owner, lessee, or occupant. The barriers to civil and criminal liability imposed by this subsection include, but are not limited to, impacts on:

(i) The individual accessing the privately owned or publicly owned land and the individual's personal property, including loss of life;

(ii) Any structures or land alterations constructed by individuals entering the privately owned or publicly owned land;

(iii) Other landholdings; and

(iv) Overall environmental resources.

(b) This subsection (2) does not apply in any case where liability for damages is provided under RCW 4.24.040.

(3) Nothing in this section limits or otherwise effects any other statutory or common law provisions relating to land access or the control of a conflagration. [2015 c 182 s 4.]

RCW 76.04.780 Utility wildland fire prevention advisory committee—Duties—Report—Membership—Immunity. (1) The commissioner shall convene a utility wildland fire prevention advisory committee with electrical power distribution utilities by August 1, 2021. The duties of the advisory committee are to advise the department on issues including, but not limited to:

(a) Matters related to the ongoing implementation of the relevant recommendations of the electric utility wildland fire prevention task force established in chapter 77, Laws of 2019, and by August 1, 2021, with an update by May 30, 2024, and updated every three years thereafter:

(i) Implementing and updating as appropriate a model agreement for managing danger trees and other vegetation adjacent to utility rights-of-way on state uplands managed by the department;

(ii) Implementing and updating recommendations of the task force related to communications and information exchanges between the department and utilities;

(iii) Implementing and updating recommendations of the task force related to protocols and thresholds when implementing provisions of RCW 76.04.015; and

(iv) Implementing and updating recommendations of the task force related to creating rosters of certified wildland fire investigator firms or persons and qualified utility operations personnel who may be called upon as appropriate;

(b) Providing a forum for electric utilities, the department, and other fire suppression organizations of the state to identify and develop solutions to issues of wildland fire prevention and risk mitigation specifically related to electric utilities transmission and distribution networks, identification of best management practices, electric utility infrastructure protection, and wildland fire suppression and response;

(c) Establishing and updating joint public communications protocols among members of the advisory committee, and other entities, to inform residents of the state of potential critical fire weather events and the potential for power outages or disruptions;

(d) Providing comment to the wildland fire advisory committee established in RCW 76.04.179 through an annual presentation addressing policies and priorities of the utility wildland fire prevention advisory committee; and

(e) All other related issues deemed necessary by the commissioner.

(2) By August 1, 2021, the department must post on its website and update quarterly as necessary:

(a) Communication protocols and educational exchanges between the department and electric utilities;

(b) A voluntary model danger tree management agreement to utilities for their consideration for execution with the department;

(c) Protocols and thresholds that may be utilized when the department's investigation involves electric utility infrastructure or potential electric utility liability; and

(d) A roster of third-party certified wildland fire investigators and qualified utility personnel that may assist the department or utility in understanding and reducing risks and liabilities from wildland fire.

(3) Beginning July 1, 2022, and at the beginning of each subsequent biennium thereafter, the department must submit, in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, a report describing the prior biennium proceedings of the advisory committee, including identification of recommended legislation, if any, necessary to prevent wildfires related to electric utilities.

(4) The utility wildland fire prevention advisory committee must develop recommendations for strengthening state agency coordination of wildland fire risk reduction, prevention, and suppression. In this work, the utility wildland fire prevention advisory committee shall seek the views of the wildland fire advisory committee created under RCW 76.04.179, as well as the views of the energy resilience and emergency management office of the department of commerce and the utilities and transportation commission.

(5) The utility wildland fire prevention advisory committee must host electric utility wildfire mitigation plans as described under RCW 19.29A.170 on its website.

(6) The commissioner or the commissioner's designee must chair the advisory committee created in subsection (1) of this section and must appoint advisory committee members. The commissioner shall invite a representative of the energy resilience and emergency management office of the department of commerce and a representative of the utilities and transportation commission. Advisory committee membership should also include:

(a) Entities providing retail electric service, including:

(i) One person representing each investor-owned utility;

(ii) Two persons representing municipal utilities;

(iii) Two persons representing public utility districts;

(iv) Two persons representing rural electric cooperatives or mutual corporations or associations;

(v) One person representing small forestland owners;

(vi) One person representing industrial forestland owners;

(b) Other persons with expertise in wildland fire risk reduction and prevention;

(c) Other persons whom the commissioner deems appropriate to carry out the functions of the advisory committee; and

(d) Two persons representing historically marginalized or underrepresented communities.

(7) The commissioner or the commissioner's designee shall convene the initial meeting of the advisory committee. The advisory committee chair must schedule and hold meetings on a regular basis, at a minimum of twice per year but not more than four times per year, in order to expeditiously accomplish the duties and make recommendations regarding the elements described in this section.

(8) The members of the advisory committee, or individuals acting on their behalf, are immune from civil liability for official acts performed in the course of their duties specifically related to the advisory committee.

(9) Participation on the advisory committee created in subsection (1) of this section is strictly voluntary and without compensation. A

lack of volunteers or applicants for any category may not prevent the committee from meeting and conducting its business.

(10) Any requirements in this section are subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for the specific purposes described. [2023 c 132 s 5; 2021 c 183 s 1; 2019 c 77 s 1.]

Findings—Intent—2023 c 132: See note following RCW 76.04.185.

RCW 76.04.900 Captions—1986 c 100. As used in this act subchapter and section captions constitute no part of the law. [1986 c 100 s 60.]