
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 2561

Brief Description: Concerning temporary duties for the wildland fire advisory committee.

Sponsors: Representatives Dent, Blake, Dye, Doglio, Johnson, Peterson and Eslick.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) to review, analyze, and make recommendations on several aspects with regard to wildfire prevention, response, and suppression activities by November 15, 2019.
- Requires the Department of Natural Resources to provide a status report of the Advisory Committee review by December 31, 2018.

Hearing Date: 1/25/18

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

Background:

Fire Protection Authority.

State law authorizes the creation of several types of fire protection and emergency service providers to address the varying needs of cities, towns, and counties as determined by demographic factors, geography, and other regional differences. Fire protection providers are not obligated to provide firefighting services to land outside their jurisdiction. The primary types of fire protection service providers are include: city or town fire departments; fire protection districts; regional fire protection service authorities; and the Department of Natural Resources (Department). The Department has direct charge and responsibility over all matters relating to forest fire services in the state. Landowners and people engaged in activity on land who have knowledge of a wildland fire must make every reasonable effort to suppress any on their land. That duty applies regardless of the origin or spread of the fire. If a person does not suppress a wildland fire, the Department must suppress it.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Washington Fire Services Mobilization Plan.

The Chief of the Washington State Patrol (WSP) has the authority to mobilize jurisdictions under the Washington State Fire Services Mobilization Plan (Mobilization Plan). The purpose of the mobilization plan is to provide a mechanism and process to quickly notify, assemble, and deploy fire service personnel and equipment to any local fire jurisdiction in Washington that has expended or will expend all available local and mutual aid resources in attempting to manage fires, disasters, or other events that jeopardize the ability of a jurisdiction to provide for the protection of life and property. The State Fire Marshal in the WSP serves as the state fire resources coordinator when a state mobilization plan is initiated.

Wildland Fire Advisory Committee.

The Wildland Fire Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) was created in 2015. The Committee advises the Commissioner of Public Lands (Commissioner) on all matters related to wildland firefighting in the state. This includes developing strategies to enhance the safe and effective use of private and public wildland firefighting resources.

The Commissioner may appoint members as the Commissioner determines is most helpful.

However, the Commissioner is required to invite at least the following people:

- the local wildland fire liaison appointed by the Commissioner;
- two county commissioners: one from east of the crest of the Cascade mountains, and one from west of the crest of the Cascade mountains;
- two owners of industrial land: one owner of timberland, and one owner of rangeland;
- the State Fire Marshal or a representative of the State Fire Marshal's Office;
- 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;
- one individual with the title of fire commissioner;
- one small forest landowner; and
- one representative from each of the following: (1) a federal wildland firefighting agency; (2) a tribal nation; (3) a statewide environmental organization; and (4) a state land trust beneficiary.

Summary of Bill:

The Commissioner must direct the Advisory Committee to analyze and make recommendations on several aspects of wildfire response. These aspects include:

- identifying potential time, resource, and cost savings, or other potential efficiencies that could improve wildfire response coordination;
- reviewing the existing role of the WSP in wildfire response activities;
- quantifying, with the assistance of Department personnel, the areas in the state not contained within an established fire district nor are subject to a planned fire response; and
- examining the value of community programs that educate homeowners and engage in preventative projects in areas where there is a wildfire risk.

The Department must provide a status report of this review to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2018, and the final report is due November 15, 2019.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 16, 2018.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.