

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 1894

As of February 27, 2020

Title: An act relating to additional temporary duties for the wildland fire advisory committee.

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

Sponsors: Representatives Dent and Griffey.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/16/20, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 2/25/20.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the scope of the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee report to include quantifying areas not contained within an established fire district and recommendations for how to protect those areas.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

Background: The 2018 Supplemental Operating Budget directed the Commissioner of Public Lands to direct the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee (Committee) to review, analyze, and make recommendations on wildfire prevention, response, and suppression activities in the state. A status report on the Committee's efforts was due to the Legislature by December 31, 2018, and a report with the Committee's recommendations was due by November 15, 2019.

Summary of Bill: The scope of the report prepared by the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee (Committee) pursuant to the 2018 Supplemental Operating Budget is expanded to include the following elements:

- mapping areas of the state east of the crest of the Cascade Mountains that are not within an established fire protection district, nor subject to a planned wildland fire response;

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- recommendations on which methods of protection may be best suited for these areas when considering values at risk;
- recommendations on the appropriate level of training and the personal protective equipment standards for Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs); and
- an estimate of the costs to establish and maintain RFPAs.

In addition, the Committee must make recommendations for appropriate fees to support the methods of protection, including increasing fire protection district levies and fees collected by the Department of Natural Resources. The report must be submitted to the Legislature by November 15, 2020.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The Wildland Fire Advisory Committee will evaluate response to fire, especially in no man's land in Eastern Washington where there is no coverage and the land is far removed from fire suppression resources. The Committee will evaluate how to improve on the initial attack, because range land fires are so devastating and move so rapidly. By tasking the Committee with additional issues, a group of experts on fire response, it keeps the Committee vibrant.

OTHER: Shrub steppe habitat in Eastern Washington is very valuable habitat and vulnerable to wildfire risk. The Committee recently submitted a report to the Legislature in December 2019, and we need to make sure that we are tasking the Committee with a new set of questions and not issues that they have already addressed.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Tom Dent, Prime Sponsor; Jason Callahan, Washington Forest Protection Association.

OTHER: Justin Allegro, The Nature Conservancy.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.