

RCW 76.06.150 Forest health—Commissioner of public lands designated as state's lead—Duties—Report to legislature. (1) The commissioner is designated as the state of Washington's lead for all forest health issues.

(2) The commissioner shall strive to promote communications between the state, tribes, and the federal government regarding forestland management decisions that potentially affect the health of forests in Washington and will allow the state to have an influence on the management of federally owned land in Washington. Such government-to-government cooperation is vital if the condition of the state's public and private forestlands are to be protected. These activities may include, when deemed by the commissioner to be in the best interest of the state:

(a) Representing the state's interest before all appropriate local, state, and federal agencies and tribes;

(b) Assuming the lead state role for developing formal comments on federal forest management plans that may have an impact on the health of forests in Washington;

(c) Pursuing in an expedited manner any available and appropriate cooperative agreements, including cooperating agency status designation, with the United States forest service and the United States bureau of land management that allow for meaningful participation in any federal land management plans that could affect the department's strategic plan for healthy forests and effective fire prevention and suppression, including the pursuit of any options available for giving effect to the cooperative philosophy contained within the national environmental policy act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. Sec. 4331).

(3) The commissioner shall regularly meet and coordinate with the regional leadership of the United States forest service, in order to:

(a) Identify strategies to improve the delivery and increase the pace and scale of forest health and resiliency, and fuels mitigation treatments, on federal lands;

(b) Document the resources needed to increase the capacity available to the United States forest service, on national forests in Washington;

(c) Identify supplemental planning and implementation support to the United States forest service, through the use of cooperative agreements and good neighbor agreements, as that term is defined in RCW 79.02.010;

(d) Maximize the utilization of available efficiencies for compliance with the national environmental policy act, as it applies to actions of the United States forest service in Washington, such as tools to increase the pace and scale of forest health treatments including, but not limited to, categorical exclusions, shared stewardship, and tribal forest protection act for forest health, fuels mitigation, and restoration activities;

(e) Accelerate national environmental policy act completion for forest health and resiliency projects, including through increased staffing and the use of partners, contractors, and department expertise to complete national environmental policy act requirements analysis; and

(f) Pursue agreements with federal agencies in the service of forest biomass energy partnerships and cooperatives authorized under RCW 43.30.835 through [and] 43.30.840.

(4) Every two years, the commissioner shall report to the legislature on progress under this section, including:

(a) The identification, if deemed appropriate by the commissioner, of any needed state or federal statutory changes, policy issues, or funding needs; and

(b) An estimate of the acres of at-risk forests on each national forest and the number of acres treated. [2021 c 298 s 6; 2009 c 163 s 5; 2004 c 218 s 2.]

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

Findings—Intent—2009 c 163: See note following RCW 43.30.835.

Effective date—2004 c 218: See note following RCW 76.06.140.