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**Agriculture & Natural Resources  
Committee**

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**HB 1652**

**Brief Description:** Establishing the wildfire prevention and protection work group.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Grant, Kretz, Hailey, Blake, Pearson, McCoy, B. Sullivan and Kristiansen.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Establishes the Wildfire Prevention and Protection Work Group.

**Hearing Date:** 2/8/07

**Staff:** Jason Callahan (786-7117).

**Background:**

The Department of Natural Resources (Department) is the lead state entity responsible for forest fire prevention and response on both state-owned and private forest land in Washington. The Department's role is to assume direct charge of and supervision of all matters pertaining to forest fires [RCW 76.04.015].

The costs of forest fire protection are intended to be equitably shared between forest landowners and the state [RCW 76.04.167]. Owners of forest land are under an obligation to provide forest fire protection on their land to a level that provides adequate protection against the spread of fire from or across their land [RCW 76.04.600]. However, if a landowner's property is located on forest land not included within the boundaries of a rural or municipal fire district, and the landowner fails to provide adequate protection against the spread of forest fire, then the landowner must pay to the Department a forest fire protection assessment (assessment) [RCW 76.04.165 & 610].

Landowners paying the assessment are billed both at a flat rate and at an additional rate according to the size of the forest land they own. All landowners must pay a flat rate assessment fee of \$14.50. This flat rate fee is paid by all forest land owners regardless of ownership size.

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Landowners who own more than 50 acres of forest land must pay the flat rate fee plus an additional 25 cents on each acre over the initial acre [RCW 76.04.610].

**Summary of Bill:**

The Wildfire Prevention and Protection Work Group (Work Group) is established to review existing fire studies and draw conclusions on a number of forest fire issues. Topics to be addressed by the Work Group include the utility of the existing assessment, fire suppression efforts used by other states, the proper scope of the Department's fire protection authority, the role of state and local building codes, and the interaction between fire danger and insurance rates.

The Work Group is composed of 22 individuals with diverse backgrounds. The Work Group's membership includes representatives from state government, local government, fire districts, the environmental community, industrial and small forest landowners, the building industry, Realtors, agriculture, contract loggers, foresters, and land owners. Staff to the Work Group is provided by the Legislature.

The final report will take the form of draft legislation and is due to be reported to the Legislature by December 1, 2007.

**Appropriation:** The sum of \$35,000 from the General Fund.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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