
**Rural Development, Agriculture, &
Natural Resources Committee**

HB 1941

Brief Description: Conducting a comprehensive review of the impact of catastrophic wildfires on communities as a means of improving government responses for the future.

Sponsors: Representatives Kretz and Blake.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Natural Resources and Washington State University to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the impacts of the 2014 Carlton complex and 2015 Okanogan complex wildfires on affected communities.
- Requires the analysis to be submitted to the Legislature by September 1, 2020.

Hearing Date: 2/19/19

Staff: Robert Hatfield (786-7117).

Background:

Department of Natural Resources: Firefighting Authority and Responsibility.

The Department of Natural Resources is responsible for forest fire prevention and response on both state-owned and private forestland in Washington.

Carlton Complex Fire.

The Carlton Complex Fire burned over 250,000 acres in North Central Washington in July 2014. The fire destroyed over 300 homes and required over 2,000 people to evacuate.

Okanogan Complex Fire.

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.

The Okanogan Complex Fire consisted of five wildfires fires which started in North Central Washington as a result of lightning strikes in August 2015. Combined, the five fires are estimated to have burned more than 300,000 acres near the communities of Twisp and Omak.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Washington State University (WSU), in consultation with a range of specified state agencies and other entities, must complete a comprehensive analysis of the impacts of the 2014 Carlton Complex and 2015 Okanogan Complex wildfires on affected communities.

The analysis must address multiple categories of costs, impacts, and effects, including:

- health impacts, including rates of respiratory illness and mental health impacts;
- impacts to housing, including housing affordability and supplies of farmworker housing;
- fire suppression costs;
- infrastructure repair, including repairs to roads, power lines, and irrigation canals;
- long-term landscape rehabilitation, including soil rehabilitation and erosion response;
- impacts on commercial activities;
- property losses;
- hydrologic impacts, including impacts to instream flows and impacts to water storage capacity;
- impacts to state and local revenues; and
- greenhouse gas emissions.

The analysis must be submitted to the Legislature by September 1, 2020. A preliminary draft of the analysis must be submitted to the Legislature by November 1, 2019.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 14, 2019.

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