

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 2561

C 227 L 18
Synopsis as Enacted

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

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Dent, Blake, Dye, Doglio, Johnson, Peterson and Eslick).

House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources
House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

Wildland Fire Advisory Committee.

The Wildland Fire Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) was created in 2015 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;
- 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.

Fire Protection Authority.

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.

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 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. In 2017 the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) issued a report analyzing fees assessed for forest protection. As a part of the analysis, JLARC compiled county-level parcel data including taxable value, fire district, and whether or not the parcel is subject to the state Forest Fire Protection Assessment.

Summary:

Subject to appropriation, the Commissioner must direct the Advisory Committee to study and provide recommendations on several aspects of wildfire prevention and preparedness. 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. In the report, the Advisory Committee must: (1) quantify, with the assistance of Department personnel, the areas in the state that are not contained within an established fire district or are not subject to a planned fire response. In quantifying areas of the state not contained within an established fire district or subject to a planned fire response, the Advisory Committee must review recommendations contained in the 2017 JLARC report on fees assessed for forest fire protection, and consult with other relevant stakeholders that are not represented on the Advisory Committee; (2) examine the value of community programs that educate homeowners and engage in preventative projects in areas where there is a wildfire risk; and (3) establish plans to help protect non-English speaking residents during wildfire emergencies.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	98	0	
Senate	48	0	(Senate amended)
House	98	0	(House concurred)

Effective: June 7, 2018