

**2SHB 1578** - S COMM AMD

By Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks

**NOT CONSIDERED 04/11/2023**

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert the  
2 following:

3 "NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature recognizes that, just  
4 as the forests on the east side of the state are being impacted by  
5 climate change, western Washington forests, too, are seeing  
6 increasing vulnerabilities to forest health and resilience. The  
7 frequency and severity of wildfires, resulting smoke incursions, and  
8 postfire flash floods and debris flow in areas of increasing  
9 population density are expected to intensify in the years to come,  
10 fueled by drought, pests, and disease, and increasing temperatures.

11 (2) The legislature recognizes that communities within the  
12 wildland urban interface and in areas of high or growing population  
13 density are increasingly experiencing more frequent and severe  
14 wildfires, resulting smoke exposure, flash floods, and debris flow,  
15 and that this intensifies health and safety hazards for residents,  
16 infrastructure, and ecosystems.

17 (3) The legislature finds that lives, health, and infrastructure  
18 are endangered by unplanned wildland fires, associated smoke  
19 exposure, and postwildfire debris flow hazards in Washington state.  
20 Wildland fires come with cascading and multihazard impacts on air  
21 quality and the health of our residents. Therefore, investing in  
22 wildland fire community preparedness, recovery, and resilience  
23 provides important cobenefits that will improve the health and safety  
24 of residents, infrastructure, and ecosystems in forested and  
25 nonforested areas and will reduce the economic burden on local  
26 governments, organizations, communities, and the state.

27 (4) The legislature acknowledges that public health and emergency  
28 management preparedness aligns with the state's environmental justice  
29 goals, where programming and interventions support vulnerable  
30 populations and those living in regions experiencing

1 disproportionately high levels of wildfire, air pollutants, and smoke  
2 exposure.

3 (5) The legislature recognizes that there is a need for a  
4 comprehensive approach to public safety and health related to  
5 evacuation planning, emergency response and stabilization, creating  
6 resilience to wildfire smoke, and postfire landslide hazard  
7 identification and mitigation. A key priority during a wildfire  
8 response is engaging relevant evacuation and emergency response  
9 plans. A key priority in wildfire recovery is emergency stabilization  
10 to prevent increased damage to life, infrastructure, or natural  
11 resources, and longer-term stabilization and rehabilitation efforts  
12 may need to be continued for several years following a wildfire to  
13 prevent unacceptable and dangerous land and water degradation.

14 (6) The legislature recognizes that while smoke from wildland  
15 fires can affect individuals differently based on a multitude of  
16 different factors, the negative health effects of poor air quality  
17 are well established. A study led by the office of financial  
18 management and the department of ecology found that when air quality  
19 is categorized as "unhealthy," as compared to "good," due to wildfire  
20 smoke, there is a 24 percent increase in medical service claims  
21 related to asthma and a 12 percent increase in emergency department  
22 visits.

23 (7) The legislature finds that cross-agency emergency management  
24 planning and response that addresses wildland fires and related smoke  
25 is important to the health and safety of the residents of Washington.  
26 It is critical to provide timely smoke impact and forecast  
27 information and messaging to the public that is accessible and based  
28 on the best available science.

29 (8) The legislature recognizes that having clean and properly  
30 ventilated indoor air is important to protect the health of all  
31 residents. Those who experience acute or chronic health challenges  
32 are at greater risk of the effects of hazardous or polluted air.  
33 During wildfire events that lead to increased smoke in the ambient  
34 air, public health officials often recommend staying indoors and  
35 closing doors and windows. However, particularly on the western side  
36 of the state, many homes do not have air conditioning systems.  
37 Compared to nearly all other states, Washington homes have some of  
38 the fewest air conditioning systems. Accordingly, during the warmest  
39 days of summer, when wildfire events are most common, doors and

1 windows are opened for ventilation purposes, which inadvertently  
2 allows smoke to enter the home and degrade indoor air quality.

3 (9) The legislature recognizes the work that the department of  
4 natural resources has done to implement RCW 76.04.505, and that,  
5 based on a robust prioritization process, the department of natural  
6 resources has focused a majority of its efforts to date on wildfire  
7 prevention and preparedness on the east side of the state.

8 (10) The legislature acknowledges that the department of natural  
9 resources' community resilience programming for community-level and  
10 property-level wildfire readiness has been successfully implemented  
11 in numerous counties throughout eastern Washington and that  
12 broadening the program statewide and incorporating smoke readiness  
13 programming will benefit communities, residents, and local  
14 governments facing growing wildfire-related risks.

15 (11) Therefore, the legislature finds that, given the increasing  
16 impacts on the rapidly growing wildland urban interface and in areas  
17 of increasing population density, the department of natural resources  
18 must now also accelerate efforts to address the threats facing them.  
19 This includes, but is not limited to, improving community  
20 preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience related to wildland  
21 fire, smoke, and postfire flash floods and debris flow.

22 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 76.04  
23 RCW to read as follows:

24 (1)(a) The department must assess areas at significant risk for  
25 wildfire, by decade, for a period encompassing not less than 30  
26 years. The assessment must include an analysis of the predicted  
27 climate influence on wildfire risk in the state and provide enough  
28 detail for landowners, the public, local governments, and tribal  
29 nations to develop strategies to address wildfire risk. The  
30 department must provide the first risk assessment to the appropriate  
31 committees of the legislature by July 1, 2027, covering a risk  
32 assessment period of July 1, 2027, through June 30, 2037. A  
33 subsequent decadal assessment is due to the appropriate committees of  
34 the legislature every 10 years thereafter. The department must also  
35 provide a mid-decade interim report to the appropriate committees of  
36 the legislature by July 1, 2032, and every 10 years thereafter.

37 (b) Within existing resources, the department must coordinate  
38 with counties on an update to wildland urban interface maps  
39 consistent with RCW 43.30.580.

1           (2) Within existing resources, the department, in consultation  
2 with the Washington military department emergency management division  
3 and the Washington state patrol, must cooperate with law enforcement,  
4 Indian tribes, emergency managers at the city and county level, and  
5 local fire protection districts to develop public safety evacuation  
6 strategies for areas identified in the respective decadal assessments  
7 as facing significant risk of wildfire. The department must provide  
8 support to help incorporate wildfire evacuation strategies within  
9 existing regional and local emergency response plans. Implementation  
10 of evacuation strategies remains under the authority of local law  
11 enforcement.

12           (3) Within existing resources, the department must lead a project  
13 to provide emergency disaster and evacuation plan messaging and  
14 information to the public at department-managed recreation and  
15 outdoor access sites. Information must be displayed in an accessible  
16 manner, including in signage at trailheads, and be relevant to the  
17 area's particular natural disaster risk profile. The department must  
18 place particular emphasis on ensuring accessibility and accommodation  
19 needs of public visitors are reflected in planning, design, and  
20 information dissemination.

21           (4) Further, the department shall:

22           (a) Expand its community resilience and preparedness programming,  
23 for community-level and property-level wildfire readiness, and the  
24 associated supporting programs such as community resilience grants  
25 and service forestry, within the wildland urban interface in counties  
26 or regions of western Washington where risk of wildfires and smoke  
27 exposure exist as determined by the department;

28           (b) Participate in cross-agency emergency management planning and  
29 response efforts related to wildfire smoke plans developed under  
30 chapter 38.52 RCW. The department shall incorporate smoke readiness  
31 into community resilience programming and coordinate with state,  
32 county, federal agencies, and Indian tribes to collaboratively share  
33 information and guidance for Washington communities affected by  
34 wildfire smoke. This includes providing updated wildfire information  
35 to air quality and health agencies and to the public through online  
36 information sources.

37           (i) The department shall coordinate cross-agency and shall  
38 provide information to assess wildland fire smoke risks and impacts.  
39 Activities may include:

1 (A) Coordinating with the department of ecology, local clean air  
2 agencies, and the United States forest service to deploy temporary  
3 air monitors to assess smoke conditions during wildfires;

4 (B) Providing information to the department of ecology to  
5 continue to improve smoke modeling and forecasting tools and support  
6 regulatory compliance;

7 (C) Advancing science and conducting research on wildfire smoke  
8 event recurrence geographically, based on different forest types and  
9 incorporating this research into planning efforts; and

10 (D) Information dissemination to the public through online  
11 information sources.

12 (ii) The provisions of this section may not impact or prevent the  
13 implementation of prescribed burns to improve forest health and  
14 resiliency and reduce wildfire risks.

15 (iii) The department shall work cross-agency to address smoke  
16 risk to transportation safety and firefighter exposure to smoke.

17 (iv) The department, in collaboration with the departments of  
18 health and ecology, shall conduct community engagement and outreach  
19 related to wildfire smoke risks and impacts, particularly in regions  
20 of the state that experience disproportionately high levels of air  
21 contaminants and pollutants. Particular emphasis in outreach will be  
22 focused on overburdened populations, and vulnerable people, including  
23 outdoor workers, those older in age, those experiencing persistent  
24 health challenges, and those experiencing unstable housing  
25 arrangements;

26 (c) Leverage community resilience programming to ensure residents  
27 and community organizations are provided information about services  
28 and programs to improve indoor air quality in the home. This may  
29 include connecting residents with their local contracted  
30 weatherization agency, which may provide home weatherization services  
31 to eligible applicants and residents. Weatherization upgrades may  
32 save energy, reduce utility costs, and improve indoor air quality;

33 (d) Within existing resources, by July 1, 2028, implement a  
34 postwildfire debris flow program. The department shall identify areas  
35 prone to hazards from postwildfire debris flows, assess burned areas  
36 to determine potential for increases in postwildfire debris flow  
37 hazards, improve modeling to determine triggers for postwildfire  
38 debris flow early warning for at-risk communities and infrastructure,  
39 and communicate to emergency managers, local governments,

1 stakeholders, state agencies, and the public both for preparedness  
2 and response; and

3 (e) By December 30, 2027, have established a structure for a  
4 state sponsored burned area emergency stabilization and response team  
5 and make recommendations regarding the appropriate number of teams  
6 needed, the funding necessary to support team deployments, and the  
7 implementation of hazard mitigation. The department shall provide  
8 capacity-building to local communities to establish local teams. The  
9 purpose of the burned area emergency stabilization and response team  
10 is to determine the need for emergency postfire treatments for public  
11 safety and resource protection. The department must consult with  
12 emergency managers, the military department, and the Washington  
13 conservation commission when developing the organizational structure  
14 of the teams established in this section.

15 (5) The department, when acting in good faith in its  
16 implementation of this section, is carrying out duties owed to the  
17 public in general and not to any individual person or class of  
18 persons separate and apart from the public. Nothing contained in this  
19 section may be construed to evidence a legislative intent that the  
20 work of preparing for, responding to, or recovering from wildfire,  
21 smoke incursions, or postfire landslides is owed to any individual  
22 person or class of persons separate and apart from the public in  
23 general. This section does not alter the department's duties and  
24 responsibilities as a landowner.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** This act may be known and cited as the  
26 cascading impacts of wildfires act."

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27 On page 1, line 4 of the title, after "interface;" strike the  
28 remainder of the title and insert "adding a new section to chapter  
29 76.04 RCW; and creating new sections."

EFFECT: Delays implementation of decadal wildfire risk  
assessments from July 2025 to July 2027. Directs the department of  
natural resources (DNR) to update wildland urban interface maps in  
coordination with counties within existing resources. Adds that  
additional air monitoring and other wildfire smoke research is not

intended to impact or prevent the implementation of prescribed burns to improve forest health and resiliency and reduce wildfire risks. Removes provisions directing DNR to work with stakeholders to identify smoke respite areas and cooling centers. Delays implementation of the postwildfire debris program from July 2024 to July 2028 and directs the DNR to implement the program within existing resources. Delays implementation of the burned area emergency stabilization and response teams from December 2024 to December 2027. Removes a null and void clause.

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