

RCW 76.06.140 Forest health problems—Findings. The legislature finds as follows:

(1) Washington faces serious forest health problems, primarily in eastern Washington, where forests are overcrowded or trees lack sufficient resilience to insects, diseases, wind, ice storms, and fire. The causes of and contributions to these conditions include fire suppression, past timber harvesting and silvicultural practices, altered species composition and stand structure, and the amplified risks that occur when the urban interface penetrates forestland.

(2) There is a private and public interest in addressing uncharacteristic outbreaks of native, naturalized, and nonnative insects and diseases, and reducing the risk of significant loss due to ice storms, windstorms, and uncharacteristic fire. The public interest is in protecting forest productivity on forests managed for commodity production; restoring and maintaining forest ecosystem vitality and natural forest processes and functions; reducing the cost of fire suppression and the resulting public expenditures; protecting, restoring, and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat, including the habitat of threatened or endangered species; and protecting drinking water supplies and water quality.

(3) Well managed forests are the first line of defense in reducing the likelihood of uncharacteristic fire, insect, and disease events, and supporting conservation and restoration of desired plants and animals. Active management of forests, consistent with landowner objectives and the protection of public resources, is the most economical and effective way to promote forest health and protect communities. Fire, native insects, and diseases perform important ecological functions when their occurrence does not present a material threat to long-term forest productivity and increase the likelihood of uncharacteristic fire.

(4) Forest health problems may exist on forestland regardless of ownership, and the state should pursue collaboration with the federal government to address common health deficiencies. [2007 c 480 § 1; 2004 c 218 § 1.]

Effective date—2004 c 218: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [March 29, 2004]." [2004 c 218 § 11.]