AN ACT Relating to proactively addressing wildfire risk by creating a forest health treatment assessment; adding a new section to chapter 76.06 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an expiration date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. A new section is added to chapter 76.06 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The department must establish a forest health assessment and treatment framework designed to proactively and systematically address the forest health issues facing the state. Specifically, the framework must endeavor to achieve an initial goal of assessing and treating one million acres of land by 2033.

(2) The department must utilize the framework to assess and treat acreage in an incremental fashion each biennium. The framework consists of three elements: Assessment; treatment; and progress review and reporting.

(a) Assessment. Each biennium, the department must identify and assess two hundred thousand acres of fire prone lands and communities that are in need of forest health treatment, including the use of prescribed fire or mechanical treatment, such as thinning.
(i) The scope of the assessment must include lands protected by the department as well as lands outside of the department's fire protection responsibilities that could pose a high risk to department protected lands during a fire.

(ii) The assessment must identify areas in need of treatment, the type or types of treatment recommended, data and planning needs to carry out recommended treatment, and the estimated cost of recommended treatment.

(b) Treatment. Each biennium, the department must review previously completed assessments and prioritize and conduct as many identified treatments as possible using appropriations provided for that specific purpose.

(c) Progress review and reporting. By December 1st of each even-numbered year, the department must provide the appropriate committees of the legislature and the office of financial management with:

   (i) A request for appropriations designed to implement the framework in the following biennium, including assessment work and conducting treatments identified in previously completed assessments;

   (ii) A prioritized list and brief summary of treatments planned to be conducted under the framework with the requested appropriations, including relevant information from the assessment; and

   (iii) A list and brief summary of treatments carried out under the framework in the preceding biennium, including total funding available, costs for completed treatment, and treatment outcomes. The summary must include any barriers to framework implementation and legislative or administrative recommendations to address those barriers.

(3) In developing and implementing the framework, the department must:

   (a) Utilize and build on the forest health strategic planning initiated under section 308(11), chapter 36, Laws of 2016 sp. sess., to the maximum extent practicable, to promote the efficient use of resources; and

   (b) Establish a forest health advisory committee to assist in developing and implementing the framework. The committee may: (i) Include representation from large and small forest landowners, wildland fire response organizations, milling and log transportation industries, forest collaboratives that may exist in the affected areas, highly affected communities and community preparedness
organizations, conservation groups, and other interested parties
demed appropriate by the commissioner; and (ii) consult with
relevant local, state, and federal agencies, and tribes.

(4) The department must establish and implement the forest health
assessment and treatment framework within the appropriations
specifically provided for this purpose.

NEW SECTION.  Sec. 2.  (1) In order to expedite initial
implementation of the forest health assessment and treatment
framework, the department of natural resources: (a) May prioritize
and treat lands identified in its 2017-2019 biennial budget request
as pilot treatment projects in lieu of the requirements of section
(2) (a) and (b) of this act; and (b) must conduct assessments in the
2017-2019 biennium for prioritization and treatment in the 2019-2021
biennium.

(2) The department of natural resources must establish and
implement the forest health assessment and treatment framework within
the appropriations specifically provided for this purpose.

(3) This section expires June 30, 2019.

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