

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4009

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Brief Description: Requesting Congress to ensure that federal wildfire response entities have the capacity to protect communities and infrastructure, limit impacts to natural resources and watersheds, and protect wildland firefighter health and safety.

Sponsors: Representatives Springer, Abell, Reed and Reeves.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/30/26, 2/3/26 [DP].

Brief Summary of Joint Memorial

- Requests the federal government to take certain actions regarding its wildland fire response consolidation.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Reeves, Chair; Morgan, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Engell, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bernbaum, McClintock, Nance, Orcutt, Richards, Schmick and Springer.

Staff: Lily Smith (786-7175).

Background:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) house the five federal agencies with primary responsibility for wildland fire management on federal lands. Within the USDA this is the Forest Service (USFS), and within the DOI they are the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

On June 12, 2025, President Trump signed Executive Order 14308 to streamline federal wildland fire governance, among other objectives and directives. This order directs the DOI and USDA to consolidate their wildland fire response programs.

In response, the DOI issued Secretarial Order 3443, creating the United States Wildland Fire Service (USWFS) to consolidate and unify the wildland programs across all DOI agencies and directing several unification and coordination actions with the USFS. The USDA issued Secretary's Memorandum 1078-017, which likewise directed the USFS to take several internal and external restructuring actions in coordination with the DOI.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature requests that the federal government take appropriate steps to ensure the federal wildfire response entities have the capacity to protect communities and infrastructure, limit natural resources impacts, and protect wildland firefighter health and safety, including through:

- ensuring that the consolidation of the USWFS is fully operational and staffed by April 1, 2026;
- delaying any further reorganization until wildland fire activity has subsided; and
- providing that the unification process is done carefully and deliberately to avoid a future reduction of wildland firefighting capacity.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There has been significant progress in the state on wildfire response, with a more aggressive program, but many of the resources in the state are actually federal. Federal funding is unstable and without more support, risks of fire and smoke to communities and vulnerable populations are growing. Fire does not recognize boundaries, and cooperation is necessary to have both effective mitigation and critical interagency response capabilities. Mitigation is very cost-effective, and it can take years to recover from a fire. There should be a regional approach. This Joint Memorial implores the federal government to recognize their role. The DOI is trying to combine all fire personnel and base them in Denver, when a more decentralized and flexible approach would be better. We don't currently have enough firefighters. While some federal reductions in personnel may make sense, they should not come at the expense of forest health and fire response. The federal entities need to responsibly manage their lands.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Larry Springer, prime sponsor; Nicky Pasi, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust; Greg Houle, Sustainable Northwest; Darcy Batura, The Nature Conservancy; Matt Doumit, Washington Forest Protection Association; Travis Dutton, Washington State Association of Counties; Guillermo Rogel, Front and Centered; Jason Callahan, Green Diamond Resource Company; Anthony Mixer, Citizen Volunteer Lobbyist; Michael Moran, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation; and Seamus Petrie, Washington Public Employees Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.