

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8015

As of January 29, 2026

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: Senators Short, Chapman, Dozier, Hasegawa and Trudeau.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/29/26.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requests the federal government takes appropriate steps to ensure federal wildfire response entities have the capacity to protect communities, limit impacts to natural resources, and operate in a manner that protects wildland firefighter health and safety.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

Background: On federal lands there are five federal agencies responsible for wildland fire management including the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service, the Department of the Interior's (DOI) Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service.

On June 12, 2025, Executive Order 14308 was signed to streamline federal wildland fire governance. The order directs the DOI and USDA to merge wildland fire programs for efficiency, leading to the creation of the United States Wildland Fire Service to unify fire response.

Summary of Bill: The memorialists request that the federal government take appropriate

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steps to ensure the federal wildfire response entities have the capacity to protect communities and infrastructure, limit impacts to natural resources and watersheds, and conduct activities in a manner that protects wildland firefighter health and safety, including through the following:

- ensure that the consolidation of the DOI Wildland Fire Service be fully operational and staffed by April 1, 2026, to enable a coordinated, cohesive response capability ahead of the 2026 wildfire season;
- delay any further reorganization, which may include the United States Forest Service, until wildland fire activity has subsided nationally to a Preparedness Level 2; and
- provide that the unification process, if implemented, should be done carefully and deliberately to avoid a reduction of wildland firefighting capacity in 2027.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Wildfire response and prevention are critical for public health and safety. Wildlife prevention is also important for the private working force and the economic base that the timber sector provides to rural communities and economic development. State funding for wildfire preparedness is also critical and needs to be maintained. The investments that have been made have been successful and need to be continued. Federal and state response needs to be maintained and efforts to reduce fuel loads have been effective. Fuel treatments are protecting homes, lives, drinking water, and reducing the intensity of fires. Climate change and lack of snow have created dry conditions and extreme fire danger. Investments need to continue for forest thinning and controlled burning. Investments in prevention are much cheaper than paying for the costs to fight large fires. Investments in the natural landscape could restore wetlands and water retention. Early detection of fires can result in reducing the size of the fire and suppression costs.

OTHER: There is an executive order missing, order 14225. Grants are available now to clear our power lines.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Shelly Short, Prime Sponsor; Nicky Pasi, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust; Rowan Kelley; Mira Hirsch; William Kiefer; Orlo Parkinson; Greg Houle, Sustainable Northwest; Wren Soperanes, Water Weaver Earthworks; Brady Dier, WA Public Employees Association (DNR Forester); Jason Callahan, Green Diamond Management Company; Kyle Smith, The Nature Conservancy; Sally Jewell; Cristina Gonzalez Torres, Latino Community Fund of WA; Katie Fields, Washington conservation action; Travis Dutton, Washington State Association of Counties; Mel Tonasket, Chairman of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation; Michael Moran, Confederated

Tribes of the Colville Reservation; Chris Carter, Pano.

OTHER: John Worthington.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.