
HOUSE BILL 1048

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Representatives Dent, Griffey, and Nance

Prefiled 12/11/24. Read first time 01/13/25. Referred to Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources.

1 AN ACT Relating to a rangeland fire protection association pilot
2 project; adding new sections to chapter 76.04 RCW; creating a new
3 section; and providing expiration dates.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that ranchers,
6 farmers, rural property owners, and others who live and work in the
7 rural areas of our state that are most susceptible to the threat of
8 wildfire are uniquely situated, by virtue of their knowledge of the
9 land and proximity to wildfires, to provide critical initial attack
10 firefighting capabilities.

11 (2) Rangeland fire protection associations have the potential to
12 offer a coordinated approach to wildland fire suppression by taking
13 advantage of the quick initial attack capabilities of those already
14 out on the land, addressing the desire of those living and working in
15 wildland areas to be active participants in protecting the places
16 where they live and work, ensuring that all those engaged in the
17 wildland firefighting effort have the necessary training, equipment,
18 and communications capabilities, and supporting the state's efforts
19 to provide a complete, coordinated approach to wildland fire
20 prevention, detection, and suppression.

1 (3) Accordingly, it is the intent of the legislature that the
2 department of natural resources implement a five-year pilot project
3 in eastern Washington in order to assess the effectiveness of
4 rangeland fire protection associations in Washington.

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

7 (1) The department shall conduct a rangeland fire protection
8 association pilot project in order to better assess the measures
9 needed to ensure the safe and effective operation of rangeland fire
10 protection associations. The pilot project must be conducted in the
11 location specified in subsection (4) of this section. The pilot
12 project must be operational by the beginning of calendar year 2026
13 and must conclude at the end of calendar year 2029.

14 (2) The operations of rangeland fire protection associations must
15 comply with the requirements established in sections 3 through 5 of
16 this act. In addition, in implementing this pilot project, the
17 department:

18 (a) Shall develop and publish recommendations concerning the
19 formation, management, operation, and training of members of a
20 rangeland fire protection association, including the determination of
21 the safety, administrative, and training requirements that must be
22 met; and

23 (b) Shall, prior to entering into an agreement with a rangeland
24 fire protection association, and at least annually thereafter, review
25 and inspect the rangeland fire protection association for the
26 following:

27 (i) The governance and management structure of the rangeland fire
28 protection association;

29 (ii) The adequacy of liability insurance; and

30 (iii) The training of all rangeland fire protection association
31 personnel.

32 (3) A rangeland fire protection association operating as part of
33 the pilot project authorized by this act may enter into agreements
34 with fire protection service agencies for the detection, prevention,
35 or suppression of fires. Subject to the approval of the department,
36 the fire protection service agency may negotiate the form and content
37 of the agreement.

38 (4) The department shall conduct the rangeland fire protection
39 association pilot project east of the crest of the Cascade mountains.

1 (5) The department shall submit a report on the pilot project as
2 an appendix to the department's annual report to the appropriate
3 committees of the legislature by December 1st of each year. The
4 report must address, at a minimum, the following elements:

5 (a) Safety;

6 (b) Training;

7 (c) Funding;

8 (d) Governance;

9 (e) Operations and effectiveness; and

10 (f) Communication and coordination with other fire protection
11 service agencies.

12 (6) This section expires June 30, 2030.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 76.04
14 RCW to read as follows:

15 (1) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout sections
16 2 through 5 of this act unless the context clearly requires
17 otherwise.

18 (a) "Member" means an individual who has been appointed by a
19 rangeland fire protection association to perform fire detection,
20 prevention, and suppression services.

21 (b) "Rangeland fire protection association" means a nonprofit
22 corporation or nonprofit unincorporated association that has entered
23 into an agreement for the detection, prevention, or suppression of
24 wildfires with any agency of the state of Washington or any fire
25 protection service agency.

26 (2) This section applies only to rangeland fire protection
27 associations operating pursuant to the pilot project established in
28 section 2 of this act. No person may form or participate in a
29 rangeland fire protection association except pursuant to the pilot
30 project established in section 2 of this act.

31 (3) This section expires June 30, 2030.

32 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 76.04
33 RCW to read as follows:

34 (1) Persons engaged in the detection, prevention, and suppression
35 of wildfires outside of the boundaries of a local, regional, or state
36 fire protection service agency may act together for the mutual
37 benefit of the members and their communities in nonprofit
38 associations or unincorporated associations. Such an association must

1 include in its name "rangeland fire protection association." Such an
2 association is authorized to enter into agreements with fire
3 protection service agencies, as defined in RCW 52.12.160, for the
4 detection, prevention, or suppression of wildfires.

5 (2) The rangeland fire protection association shall identify the
6 physical boundaries within which it will provide detection,
7 prevention, and suppression of wildfire services and resources. The
8 service boundaries of a rangeland fire protection association may be
9 adjacent to department protected lands, as defined in RCW 76.04.005.
10 The operations of a rangeland fire protection association may, on an
11 occasional and temporary basis, extend beyond its boundaries and onto
12 department protected lands for the purpose of attempting to
13 extinguish or control a wildland fire consistent with RCW 76.04.770.

14 (3) The rangeland fire protection association must have liability
15 insurance.

16 (4) The provisions of this chapter do not require a person or a
17 person's agent to be a member of a rangeland fire protection
18 association in order to suppress a fire occurring on the person's
19 property or fires that pose a threat to the person's property.

20 (5) This section applies only to rangeland fire protection
21 associations operating pursuant to the pilot project established in
22 section 2 of this act. No person may form or participate in a
23 rangeland fire protection association except pursuant to the pilot
24 project established in section 2 of this act.

25 (6) This section expires June 30, 2030.

26 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 76.04
27 RCW to read as follows:

28 (1) Rangeland fire protection association members must:

29 (a) Be at least 18 years old;

30 (b) During all fire suppression activities, use and maintain
31 personal protective equipment that meets published standards of the
32 Washington state department of natural resources or United States
33 bureau of land management as appropriate during wildfire suppression
34 activities; and

35 (c) Have achieved a basic level of wildland fire training. The
36 recommended training for a rangeland fire protection association
37 member participating in wildland fire suppression is training that
38 achieves the level of wildland firefighter 2, as specified in the
39 published standards of the national wildfire coordinating group.

1 (2) The provisions of RCW 76.04.770 apply to members of a
2 rangeland fire protection association.

3 (3) This section applies only to rangeland fire protection
4 associations operating pursuant to the pilot project established in
5 section 2 of this act. No person may form or participate in a
6 rangeland fire protection association except pursuant to the pilot
7 project established in section 2 of this act.

8 (4) This section expires June 30, 2030.

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