



WE ARE ALL AT RISK OF WILDFIRE— WE MUST ACT NOW

DNR's plan for dedicated funding will change the trajectory of Washington's wildfire crisis. To do that, this proposal invests in wildfire response, forest restoration and community resilience.



**THE TIME TO ACT
IS NOW. WE KNOW
THE RESOURCES WE
NEED, BOTH FOR
OUR FIREFIGHTERS
AND FOR FOREST
HEALTH, TO
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CONTACT

Kristine Reeves
Legislative Director
360-764-0013 (mobile)
kristine.reeves@dnr.wa.gov
dnr.wa.gov

Wildfire Poses a Clear and Present Danger to Our Health and Safety, Economy, and Way of Life

Last year, Washington saw wildfire devastation across the state – east and west, urban and rural. The danger and destruction is increasing.

Annual acres burned in Washington:

- **The 2000s:** 189,000 acres/yr.
- **Last five years:** 488,000 acres/yr.
- **2020:** 812,000 acres

In 2020, the town of Malden was leveled and we lost a one-year-old child in the Cold Springs Fire.

For two of the last three years, Washington had the worst air quality in the world due to wildfires. On average, fighting wildfires in Washington costs \$150 million each year. And that's just 9% of the total cost of wildfire when you factor in economic and public health impacts.

The time for talk is over; it's time to act.

We Have a Blueprint to Tackle Our Wildfire Crisis

This bill is a roadmap to transform how we fight and prevent wildfires and keep our communities safe.

1. WILDFIRE RESPONSE (\$75.2 million)

Expand and modernize our wildfire fighting force to keep fires small.

2. FOREST RESTORATION (\$31.4 million + \$5.9 million for workforce training)

Accelerate our forest health and restoration work to prevent fires in the future.

3. COMMUNITY RESILIENCE (\$12.6 million)

Build resilience in our communities to protect homes and lands from fire.

The dedicated account, if funded with \$125 million each biennium, would provide the proactive resources needed on the ground today, as well as the long-term investments needed to fulfill DNR's 20-year Forest Health Strategic Plan and Wildland Fire Prevention 10-Year Strategic Plan.

FIRE SUPPRESSION STATEWIDE COSTS \$150 MILLION EACH YEAR.

A Proactive Approach Would Fund:

100 New Fulltime Firefighters



 **2** New Fixed-Wing Planes

1.25 

Million Acres of Forest Restoration

2.2 MILLION

Number of homes in Washington exposed to wildfire.*

* USFS PACIFIC NORTHWEST QUANTITATIVE WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

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Wildfire Response (\$75.2 million)

Historically, fire seasons were manageable with the resources we had. In the 2000s, for example, the average acres burned each year was 189,000. In the last five years, that has exploded to an annual average of 488,000 acres. But as fire seasons have gotten more dangerous and destructive, our ability to fight and contain these fires has lagged behind.

In the first biennium, this proactive approach would fund:

100 more firefighters, including:

- 3 hand crews (20 people each)
- 20 dozer operators
- 2 post-release hand crews (10 people each)
- Wildfire response on nearly 400,000 acres of land that is currently unprotected

Expanding our air fleet and new technology:

- 2 new fixed wing planes
- Upgrading and modernizing our aging Huey helicopters
- Adding infrared/night vision technology and advance fire detection systems to detect fires earlier and respond faster

Forest Restoration (\$31.4 million + \$5.9 million for Workforce Training)

Building up our forests' natural fire resistance requires treating them and keeping them healthy. This account will:

- **Fully fund — and accelerate** — DNR's 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan, which calls for us to restore natural wildfire resistance to 1.25 million acres of forest.
- **Bolster local fire districts** — often the ones who are first to arrive on the ground — with funding for training, equipment, and personnel.
- **\$5.9 million for workforce development** — creating career pathways from forester to firefighter to mill worker, bringing good-paying jobs to communities that need them the most.

Because fire doesn't stop at property lines, we must restore forests on federal, state, tribal, and private land. This work is underway — we treated 256,000 acres from 2017 to 2019 — but it's slow and difficult due to sporadic and unpredictable funding, and the challenge ahead of us is immense.

Community Resilience (\$12.6 Million)

We know which communities in our state are at risk. We know where we need to target our investments to protect these communities and strengthen their defenses. For example, three towns in Washington have a higher risk than Paradise, Calif.: Roslyn, Leavenworth, and Twin Lakes.

This bill would help us make investments at the home, neighborhood, and community level to reduce wildfire risk and protect our communities. That means:

- Investing in defensive strategies at the community level, like fuel breaks, prescribed fire, and creating defensible green space.
- Direct assistance to home owners to secure their property and neighborhood with programs like FireWise.

We Are All In This Together

This bill sets Washington state on a proactive course to be self-reliant in the face of our wildfire crisis.

It's time to lead on this issue. We have to remember what happened to Malden, Omak, Amboy, Yakima, and Bonney Lake in 2020. And we have to act to prevent it from happening again.