Commissioner’s Order

201225

State of Washington
Department of Natural Resources
Peter Goldmark, Commissioner of Public Lands

Commissioner’s Order
Forest Health Hazard Warning Designation
Klickitat County
Yakima County

1. Recitals
The Washington State Legislature has established that the state faces serious forest health problems, primarily in eastern Washington, where forests are overcrowded or trees lack sufficient resilience to insects, diseases, wind, ice storms, and wildfires (RCW 76.06.140). Under state law, the Commissioner of Public Lands is responsible for serving as the state’s lead on all forest health issues and may initiate actions to manage threats to forest health, including:

- Encouraging landowners and managers to maintain their forest lands in a healthy condition in order to meet their individual ownership objectives, protect public resources, and avoid contributing to forest insect or disease outbreaks or increasing the risk of uncharacteristic fire (RCW 76.06.040), and
- Addressing forest health issues by a tiered system of authorities (RCW 76.06.160), and
- Appointing a forest health technical advisory committee to advise the Commissioner of Public Lands on remedial actions when it is determined that forest lands in any area of the state appear to be threatened by a forest health condition (RCW 76.06.170), and
- Having considered the committee’s findings and recommendations, issuing a Forest Health Hazard Warning to address an existing threat to forest health or to manage the development of such a threat (RCW 76.06.180), and
- Coordinating, supporting and assisting in establishing cooperative forest health projects to address outbreaks, and prioritizing available assistance in areas under a Forest Health Hazard Warning (RCW 76.06.030, 160).

2. Forest Health Hazard Warning Established
In accordance with such authorities, and as per statutory requirements, having received recommendations from the forest health technical advisory committee on July 2, 2012; having consulted with county governments, forest land owners and managers, consulting foresters, and other interested parties; and having on July 23, 2012, held public meetings in the affected area, I, Peter Goldmark, hereby ORDER and DECLARE a Forest Health Hazard Warning including recommended voluntary actions for all federal, state and private lands within the boundary described below and depicted in Exhibit A, and for the applicable causes and forest conditions described herein:

That portion of Klickitat County which lies north of the Bickelton-Mabton and Bickelton-Goldendale Highway between the intersection of U.S. Highway 97 and the eastern County boundary, and which lies north of the Columbia River between U.S. Highway 97 and the western border of the Klickitat Watershed Resource Inventory Area, extending to the southern border of the Yakama Indian Reservation, and

That portion of Yakima County which lies north of the Yakama Indian Reservation boundary, principally including the exterior boundary of the Ahtanum State Forest.

The Warning area boundary contains portions of forested land managed by federal agencies, including: scattered forest parcels managed by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management; the Conboy Lake National Wildlife Refuge managed by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service.
3. Cause for the Warning and Applicability
The causes and applicability of the Forest Health Hazard Warning declared herein are as follows:

For ponderosa pine and mixed coniferous forests in the dry forest environment that are experiencing or contain susceptible conditions for damage from pine bark beetles, principally mountain pine beetle and western pine beetle, wherever they may occur throughout the Warning area.

4. Description of Susceptible Forest Conditions
Any parcel located within the warning area boundary is subject to the voluntary actions recommended under this order, if it contains the following forest stand conditions constituting host suitability for the causal and applicable insects:

Ponderosa pine and mixed coniferous stands in the dry forest environment containing greater than fifty percent ponderosa pine, and containing trees of an average diameter equal to or greater than ten inches at breast height, and exhibiting a stand density of one hundred twenty square feet of tree basal area per acre or greater, provided

That due consideration and priority is given to areas adjacent to the 2011 Monastery Complex wildfire, which may be experiencing elevated populations of pine bark beetles and other insects.

5. Recommended Actions
Forest landowners and managers are advised to consider the following actions:

Seek the assistance of a professional forester to evaluate site-specific risks and management objectives, and

Within existing local, state and federal requirements, pursue hazard reduction activities which address the susceptible forest conditions outlined in Paragraph 4 above, including but not limited to tree thinning, harvest, and controlled burning as discussed in the July 2, 2012 recommendations of the forest health technical advisory committee. Committee recommendations are posted on the DNR website: www.dnr.wa.gov, and

Focus these activities, to the extent compatible with landowner and land manager objectives, on the highest priority forest types and restoring benchmark forest conditions specified in the July 2, 2012 recommendations of the forest health technical advisory committee.

6. Tribal Government-to-Government Consultation
Consistent with Commissioner’s Order No. 201029, DNR seeks to maintain openness in government-to-government consultative discussions with the Yakama Nation in establishing the Forest Health Hazard Warning area. Yakama tribal forest management is recognized as exemplary in identifying and quickly addressing forest health hazards and the Yakama Indian Reservation is excluded from the Warning area. However, further consultation on mutually beneficial hazard reduction objectives and activities may be desirable. Therefore, IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the DNR State Forester and the Tribal Relations Manager shall, upon the request of the Yakima Nation, consult on DNR’s behalf regarding implementation of the Forest Health Hazard Warning with such personnel as the Yakama Nation may designate as their representative.

7. Implementation by DNR staff
IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that DNR staff shall prioritize technical assistance, project funding, and project coordination services within all designated Forest Health Hazard Warning areas, consistent with statutory authority and other requirements of applicable law, available resources, and existing deliverables.

DNR staff shall identify to their appropriate Deputy Supervisor such additional resources and capacity as may be necessary to adequately address forest hazards.

DNR staff shall engage other land management, regulatory, and technical assistance agencies, and interested landowners and stakeholders, in order to develop and evaluate 1) Near-term
options for priority projects with the Warning area boundary, and 2) Long-term action strategies to prevent or reduce the severity of future outbreaks, and their attendant negative consequences for environmental and economic forest values.

DNR staff shall coordinate with the technical advisory committee in developing a system to monitor progress and results of activities pursuant to RCW 76.06.170(2)(d), recognizing that implementing committee recommendations across the scope and scale of identified forest conditions will require sustained effort over an extended period of time.

DNR staff shall maintain employee and public safety when implementing projects designed to improve forest health conditions and protect public and trust resources.

Any landowner or manager subject to this Warning may make a written request for review of a forest health management plan, which DNR may certify as adequate to address the subject of the Warning pursuant to RCW 76.06.180(9). The submittal of all proposed plans should be sent to the attention of:

Karen Ripley
Forest Health Program Manager
Washington State Department of Natural Resources
1111 Washington St. SE
MS 47001
Olympia, WA 98504

IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 28TH DAY OF AUGUST, 2012.

STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

PETER GOLDMARK
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS
Forest Health Hazard Warning

- Pine bark beetles
- Ponderosa pine suitable host areas for bark beetles
- Lodgepole pine suitable host areas for bark beetles
- Suitable host areas for western spruce budworm
- County Boundaries

Data sources:
- Bark beetle areas for pine bark beetles created from a query of maf_barkbb/Ext and maf_barkbb/Ext
- GMA areas created from USGS data.
- Query of 2004 layer based on the following attributes:
  - Wakia, Level 1 and Area, Ext
  - GMA, Level 1 and Area, Ext
  - GMA, Level 1 and Area, Ext

Forest Health Hazard Warning

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF Natural Resources
Peter Goldmark - Commissioner of Public Lands

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- Suitable host areas for western spruce budworm created from a query of maf_wsb/Ext and maf_wsb/Ext