Agency: 490 Department of Natural Resources
Decision Package Code/Title: IA Initial Attack Fire Engine Crews
Budget Period: 2009-11
Budget Level: PL - Performance Level

Recommendation Summary Text:

In a climate of drought that is parching vegetation and increased housing development in high fire prone areas, this request seeks to maintain two 3-person fire engine crews. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Fire Control Program no longer can support these initial attack firefighting crews. Loss of these resources increase the risk of wildfires growing larger before being contained thereby increasing suppression cost and the threat to the public.

Fiscal Detail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operating Expenditures</th>
<th>FY 2010</th>
<th>FY 2011</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>001-1 General Fund - Basic Account-State</td>
<td>93,500</td>
<td>93,500</td>
<td>187,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>190-6 Forest Fire Protection Assessment-Non-Appropriate</td>
<td>93,400</td>
<td>93,400</td>
<td>186,800</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cost</strong></td>
<td><strong>186,900</strong></td>
<td><strong>186,900</strong></td>
<td><strong>373,800</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staffing</th>
<th>FY 2010</th>
<th>FY 2011</th>
<th>Annual Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FTEs</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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</table>

Package Description:

What problem is the agency trying to address?

The Fire Control Program no longer can support a 20-person initial attack firefighter handcrew and two 3-person fire engine crews. Loss of the these resources increase the risk of wildfires growing larger before being contained thereby increasing suppression cost and the threat to the public.

If these firefighter crews are eliminated it is reasonable to expect that an additional six wildfires per year would grow larger as a consequence of reduced initial attack capability. Using historical data from the Program's Fire Statistics database, five year average estimated costs for the six fires that grow beyond 10 acres are as follows;

3 fires contained between 10 and 100 acres (3 x $53,500 = $160,500)
2 fires contained when exceeding 100 acres (2 x $900,000 = $1,800,000)
1 fire that grows to become a project fire ($2,000,000)

The expected fiscal consequence from the additional six fires would be an increase of approximately $4 million per year in suppression expenses.

Loss of the firefighter crews would reduce DNR's expected initial attack success rate from 93% to 92%. This means DNR's
performance measure "percentage of total wildfires contained at or below 10 acres" would be adjusted downward to reflect the higher assumed risk to public and firefighter safety, higher natural resource damages, loss of residences and other improved property, and greater direct fire suppression expenses associated with larger wildfires given the reduced firefighter crews.

What would this request actually buy?

This request funds two 3-person fire engine crews that would be deployed where needed to most effectively contribute to DNR's initial attack success. It would also fund critical training to develop DNR's current and future firefighter leaders.

Left unfunded would be a 20-person initial attack handcrew. The Ahtanum handcrew has for many years been based west of Yakima in Southeast Region and used primarily east of the Cascade Mountains to dig fireline to check the spread of wildfire. Without this crew, DNR would rely more on private handcrews that are about twice as expensive and not guaranteed to be available when needed.

Narrative Justification and Impact Statement

What specific performance outcomes does the agency expect?

The principle performance outcome is maintaining DNR's current objective to control 93% of wildfires on lands protected from fire by DNR at less than 10 acres in size. Assuming roughly 900 such wildfires per year, current expectation is that 837 don't exceed 10 acres, while up to 63 grow larger. Without the requested funding, the initial attack resource reduction is expected to result in 6 more fires/year growing larger than 10 acres (for a total of 69). This would reduce the expected initial attack success to 92% ((900-69)/900 = 92.3%). If funded, only an additional 2 fires/year would be expected to grow larger than 10 acres, for a total of 65. This would maintain the initial attack success rate roughly at 93% (92.8%).

The program's performance target is "percentage of total wildfires contained at or below 10 acres on DNR protected land" would stay at its current level of 93%. Not funding this package would decrease this target to 92%.

Performance Measure Detail

Activity: A011 Fire Control - Preparedness, Training and Forest Fire Protection Assessment

Incremental Changes

No measures submitted for package

Is this decision package essential to implement a strategy identified in the agency's strategic plan?

This proposal supports DNRs strategic goal to assure that losses to life from fire are prevented and property loss is minimized by implementing strategies to:

Maintain a high level of readiness to fight major fires

This proposal supports DNRs strategic goal to assure that the public we serve widely and consistently hold DNR in high esteem by implementing strategies to:

Protect public safety
Be fiscally responsible

This proposal supports DNRs strategic goal to assure that DNR's workforce is skilled, knowledgeable, motivated, and effective by implementing strategies to:

Transfer institutional knowledge to the DNR workforce of the future
Develop employee leadership skills to anticipate emerging management challenges
Maintain high professional standards in all programs
Protect employee safety

September 5, 2008
Does this decision package provide essential support to one of the Governor's priorities?

This proposal supports the Priorities of Government improve the safety of people and property by

Preparing for and responding to emergencies

This proposal supports the Priorities of Government improve the quality of Washington's natural resources by

Establishing safeguards and standards to protect natural resources

Does this decision package make key contributions to statewide results? Would it rate as a high priority in the Priorities of Government process?

Yes. It importantly contributes to the Priorities of Government improve the safety of people and property. DNR's ability to meet current expectations for controlling wildfires thru:

providing for public and firefighter safety;
protecting forest and other natural resources;
minimizing risk of loss of residences and other improved properties protected by municipal fire departments and fire protection districts; and,
avoiding substantial added fire suppression expenses.

This proposal also contributes to efficient and effective results: the ratio between expected fire suppression cost avoidance and the cost of this proposal is approximately 4:1 (e.g., each dollar spent will help avoid four dollars of expenditures).

What are the other important connections or impacts related to this proposal?

As described in the 2020 Strategic Plan for Wildland Fire Protection, DNR accomplishes its fire protection mission in cooperation with local, state, federal, tribal and international firefighting agencies (and relies heavily on private sector resources as well). A reduction in DNR's firefighting response capabilities impacts the others, because DNR has fewer resources to send to their assistance when requested.

What alternatives were explored by the agency, and why was this alternative chosen?

A number of alternatives were considered. Each was compared to the requested initial attack fire engine crews and determined to present a higher risk/reward ratio (e.g., judged to have a greater risk of contributing to a higher number of large wildfires at the same level of cost avoidance and/or as having a higher impact on the sustainability of DNR's fire protection program).

Alternatives explored included:
1. Reduce expenditures for annual incident management team/organization training and make deeper funding reductions in initial attack leadership and mid-level leadership training.
2. Eliminate the three initial attack helitack firefighting crews.
3. Reduce the number of DNR initial attack firefighting helicopters.
4. Continue to fund the Ahtanum crew but do not fund a higher number of engine crews.
5. Continue to fund the Ahtanum crew but do not fund the Highlands crew, or do not fund the North Columbia 10-person crew and a greater number of fire engine crews.
6. Instead of not funding the entire Ahtanum 20-person crew, reduce funding for both the Ahtanum and Highland crews to support 10-person (rather than 20-person) crews.
7. Change agency policy and reduce expenditures by staffing fire engines with two, not three, firefighters.
8. Permanently restructure the Westside fire protection program through merging two or more regional fire organizations. Options include: a single Westside organization; combining SPS and NW; and combining OLY, SPS and NW. None were considered potentially viable cost-reduction approaches for the 09-11 biennium based on the potential cost savings balanced against the lessons learned from the merger of Southwest and Central Regions and the need to have decentralized initial attack resources linked through effective dispatch offices.
9. SELECTED - request funding for only two initial attack engine crews and training, seeking to maintain crucial initial attack capability in an environment of limited resources.

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What are the consequences of not funding this package?

Not funding this proposal will result in increased risk that fires that now are contained when small on peak fire days (e.g., during and immediately after a lightning event) won’t be contained during the first 12 hours and will therefore grow large.

DNR accomplishes its fire protection mission in close cooperation with local, state, federal and international firefighting agencies (and relies heavily on private sector resources as well). Any reduction in DNR’s firefighting response capabilities impacts the others, because it means that DNR will have fewer resources to send to their assistance when requested.

Regardless of the decision, loss of the Ahtanum firefighting crew will result in greater reliance by DNR on private handcrews. Private handcrews are roughly twice as expensive compared to DNR crews.

What is the relationship, if any, to the state’s capital budget?

None

What changes would be required to existing statutes, rules, or contracts, in order to implement the change?

None

Expenditure and revenue calculations and assumptions

This request funds two 3-person fire engine crews. These fire engine crews would continue to be deployed where needed to most effectively contribute to DNR’s initial attack success. Engine crews carry out a variety of initial attack firefighting functions that usually involve effective delivery of water to slow or check the spread of wildfire.

The two 3-person fire engine crews requires 1.5 FTE and costs $218,200
The engine crew staffing is composed of the following members: .5 FTE NR Worker 2 and 1.0 FTE Forest Fire Fighter

All fire crews undergo mandatory training. This critical training maintain’s DNR capacity to develop future firefighter leaders.

The training component built into these crews requires .75 FTE and costs $155,300
The staff training is composed of a .5 FTE NR Specialist 2 and a .25 FTE NR Worker 2

Goods and services and travel costs are based on program averages.

Agency administrative cost is calculated at 27% and shown as object T. FTE associated with agency admin is estimated at .6 of a position.

There are no anticipated revenue changes due to this proposal.

Which costs and functions are one-time? Which are ongoing? What are the budget impacts in future biennia?

All are on-going expenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object Detail</th>
<th>FY 2010</th>
<th>FY 2011</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Salaries And Wages</td>
<td>69,800</td>
<td>65,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>B Employee Benefits</td>
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<td><strong>Total Objects</strong></td>
<td><strong>186,900</strong></td>
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September 5, 2008