

Agency: 490 Department of Natural Resources
Decision Package Code/Title: C1 Increase Firefighting Capacity
Budget Period: 2015-17
Budget Level: PL - Performance Level

Recommendation Summary Text:

Washington has endured two consecutive record-breaking wildfire seasons that have inflicted catastrophic harm on communities and landscapes. There's an urgent need to increase in-state, on-call wildfire suppression capacity to protect public safety, natural resources and ecosystems, threatened wildlife populations, and the economic viability of communities across the State. To prepare for and respond to wildfires, DNR requests funding to increase firefighting capacity of DNR and local partners by adding: grants to support local fire districts, coordinated pre-season fire training with agency and contract partners, more contracts for heavy equipment and aircraft, contract and asset management support, and fireline safety supervision.

Fiscal Detail

Operating Expenditures	<u>FY 2016</u>	<u>FY 2017</u>	<u>Total</u>
001-1 General Fund - Basic Account-State		24,279,000	24,279,000
Total Cost		24,279,000	24,279,000
Staffing	<u>FY 2016</u>	<u>FY 2017</u>	<u>Annual Average</u>
FTEs	.0	50.0	25.0

Package Description:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is the State of Washington's on-call wildfire department with statutory responsibility to protect 13 million acres of state-owned and private forest land. Responding quickly and aggressively fighting wildfires minimizes their duration, damage, and ultimate suppression cost. DNR strives to contain wildfires to the smallest size possible. However, without additional personnel, equipment, and training for DNR and local partners, the resources available are insufficient to meet the growing scale of wildfire risks. DNR and our partners must have sufficient firefighting capacity to protect the public, communities, and natural resources.

In the past two fire seasons approximately 1.5 million acres have burned. Homes and businesses have been destroyed and precious lives have been lost in Washington wildfires. It is imperative to interrupt the trajectory of increasing wildfire devastation with adequately prepared, equipped, coordinated, and professional wildland firefighting forces statewide. DNR requests General-Fund State (GF-S) funding to better prepare this agency and our local firefighting partners for rapid initial response and surge capacity. Likewise, fire fuels on the landscape must be reduced drastically to stem the intensity and rapid growth of fires and provide anchor points from which wildland firefighters can stop wildfires from spreading.

The components of this proposal are:

- A. Preparedness and Rapid Emergency Response Capacity

DNR will organize and coordinate pre-positioned emergency response resources to rapidly deploy to high-risk areas .

1. A grant program will be created with \$6 million GF-S to help local fire districts modernize and increase their capacity with equipment and training. This expansion of DNR's partners' capacity will act as a resource multiplier for existing state and federal resources. One DNR Grant Specialist (NRS2) will administer the grants.
2. To increase firefighting readiness, DNR will add resources to support both rapid emergency deployment and surge capacity for efficient and cost-effective management of larger incidents.
 - a. DNR will develop and position rapid response task forces comprised of a combination of DNR, local fire district, and contract resources to be deployed on a moment's notice. These pre-positioned rapid response forces will include engines, hand crews, dozers, tenders, aviation assets, and fireline leadership. This will enhance DNR's ability to respond rapidly across the most fire-prone landscapes utilizing experienced and knowledgeable local staff. DNR's ability to safely, effectively, and promptly deploy fireline resources will be assisted by:
 - Three additional FTEs (WMS 1) to add senior fire commanders in acutely fire-prone regions to coordinate local and regional fire response.
 - Six additional DNR fire FTEs (Fire Unit Foresters - NRS2) to provide supervision and incident command for resources at the region unit level.
 - Eight FTEs (Fire Forester-NRS1) to directly supervise fire engines and other responding resources during initial attack.
 - One FTE Wildfire Fiscal Accountability Specialist (WMS1) to provide expert oversight and counsel to maximize cost-effectiveness of suppression activities and to guard against waste, unjustified expenses, or fraud.
 - One geographic specialist Logistics Dispatcher (NRS3) to procure logistical resources for initial attack and large fire needs .
 - A Wildfire Intel Coordinator FTE (NRS3) to standardize and compile reports of resource availability, needs, and gaps in critical resource categories.
 - A Fire Response Coordinator FTE (NRS3) to facilitate coordination among DNR, federal, and local dispatch centers to ensure timely prioritized dispatch of scarce resources.
 - b. For expanded aerial firefighting capacity during initial emergency response:
 - One FTE (Wildfire Division Assistant Division Manager for Aviation-WMS 2) will be added for programmatic supervision of both DNR and contracted aviation fire suppression resources.
 - Two additional FTEs (NRS3) will fill critical needs for aviation dispatch.
 - c. To modernize outdated emergency response communications, DNR will invest in radio communications systems maintenance and upgrades (\$1.2M) in coordination with partners through the State Interoperability Executive Committee.
3. To raise capability and capacity of Washington's collective firefighting forces, DNR will coordinate a program of ongoing comprehensive interagency wildfire training and capacity improvements for state, local, and tribal fire personnel and private fire resource contractors.

DNR will conduct coordinated wildfire training to interagency standards, expanded to include local fire districts, Washington National Guard, tribes, and private contractors.

- One DNR FTE (Fire Training Specialist - NRS3) will coordinate interagency training among state, local, tribal and federal partners .
- Six FTEs (Training Coordinators - NRS3) will facilitate regional training programs that include direct assistance to local fire districts to achieve wildfire training and equipment standards.
- One FTE (Contract Specialist - NRS2) will proactively enroll and provide training for wildfire suppression contractors (particularly heavy equipment operators and other local resources) prior to the start of fire season .
- DNR will plan and conduct classroom and live-fire field exercises for DNR's partners to participate alongside DNR employees in professional wildland firefighter training.

B. Wildfire Prevention and Fuels Reduction

Approximately 2.7 million acres of the 10 million acres of forestland in eastern Washington are at high risk of damage by disease, insects, and wildfire. Decades of past management practices have changed the structure of these forests, resulting in species compositions in overstocked stands that are susceptible to intense burns. Climate change is expected to worsen these challenges. Homes built on and near forestland have increased human exposure to these risks.

- Funding will be added (\$500,000) for contracts with communities willing to commit to being Firewise (create defensible spaces

around structures, take precautions during fire season, educate neighbors).

- Funding will be added so that more wildfire fuel reduction and forest health restoration can be conducted in the near term to reduce the ferocity of fire behavior in wooded landscapes (\$2 million for private lands; \$2 million for state trust lands).
- Three additional FTEs (Wildfire Prevention Coordinators-NRS3) will implement Firewise, wildfire prevention education, and other community outreach programs, and coordinate the grants and contracts that help landowners reduce fire fuels.
- Four additional FTEs (Stewardship Foresters-NRS2) will serve as local contacts who provide information and technical assistance to landowners regarding effective fuel reduction techniques, and administer contracts to accomplish grant-funded work.
- Five Fire Wardens (NRS1) will patrol fire-prone areas to ensure landowner compliance with grant and contract requirements, burn permit conditions, and industrial fire precaution levels.

Narrative Justification and Impact Statement

What specific performance outcomes does the agency expect?

Efficient and rapid response with sufficient resources to contain wildfires to ten acres or less 95 percent of the time. Responding quickly, with adequate resources, helps keep wildfires small and reduces the overall costs of fire suppression. Funds will be used to hire, train, and place additional resources in strategic locations in areas at greatest risk for wildfires in order to reduce response times as conditions escalate during the fire season.

With prevention and fuel reduction funding, DNR will aim to enroll at least 100 more Firewise communities and conduct fuel hazard reduction treatments on at least 17,000 acres of forested land.

Performance Measure Detail

Activity: A011	Fire Preparedness - Training and Forest Fire Protection Assessment	Incremental Changes
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No measures submitted for package

Activity: A012	Fire Regulation and Prevention	Incremental Changes
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No measures submitted for package

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

This proposal supports the Department of Natural Resources' 2014-17 Strategic Plan as follows:

Goal 2A: Protect Washington's Communities and Natural Resources from Wildfire and other Natural Hazards.

Strategy 1: Coordinate and target efforts to minimize human-caused wildfire starts.

Strategy 2: Suppress Wildfires Safely, effectively, and cost-effectively.

Strategy 5: Improve DNR's capabilities to respond to complex incidents and disasters.

Does this DP provide essential support to one or more of the Governor's Results Washington priorities?

Yes. This proposal supports the Governor's Results Washington, Goal 1: Healthy and Safe Communities: Wildland fires put human lives at risk and have the potential to cause substantial loss to property and critical infrastructure. DNR strives to keep losses to a minimum by strategically positioning DNR's fire resources, equipment and support teams and personnel throughout the state.

This proposal supports the Governor's Economy Priority. The Governor is committed to protect and manage scarce resources: land, water, energy, labor, capital, and credit.

This proposal indirectly supports the Governor's Budget Priorities, including the following:

- 1) Make significant and targeted investments in education to meet our constitutional obligations under the McCleary decision through the protection of trust land resources that generate revenue for K-12 schools.
- 2) Promote policies and opportunities to grow jobs.
- 3) Prepare Washington for a vibrant, thriving economy.

Implementation of this package involves efficient firefighting, which serves to enhance the protection of education-linked revenue in the form of the state's natural resources. Facilities vital to the Governor's Education Priorities come to fruition through revenue generated by the resources that DNR protects.

Adding personnel to the firefighting and forest fuel treatment programs, and enrolling more private contractors as proposed, are small but deliberate opportunities to grow jobs. Effective wildland firefighting safeguards related industries, which plays a vital part in a productive state economy.

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

DNR's firefighting mission is essential to maintain Washington's forests for current and future generations, and to protect trust revenue generated from State forests that supports schools, universities, and local governments.

DNR accomplishes its fire protection mission in cooperation with local, federal, tribal and international firefighting agencies and relies heavily on private-sector resources. When any of the partners' resources are inadequate, firefighting response capabilities of the cooperating agencies are adversely affected. Prompt and aggressive initial attack on fires depends upon all regional cooperating agencies, including DNR, having sufficient resources, especially during highly active fire seasons.

Although effective wildland firefighting is seldom linked directly to the health of Puget Sound, the aftereffects of wildfire, such as flooding and barrenness of earth, do affect ecosystems beyond the immediate vicinity of the burn scar. Effective forest health treatments and wildland fire suppression yield benefits agencies that are focused on watersheds, aquatic lands, and uplands.

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

DNR participates actively in federal property surplus programs to reduce the costs of specialized firefighting equipment. The "militia" strategy utilizes DNR's regular workforce, supplemented by seasonal DNR firefighters and private contractors. The efficiency of this approach was validated by a 2013 legislatively-directed review conducted by the Washington Institute for Public Policy.

DNR continues to explore alternatives to maximize suppression resources. A full contingent of engine and helicopter resources, with sufficient staff support and safe supervision, is the most cost effective method of having a positive impact on DNR's fire suppression mission.

Although media messaging about wildfire hazards is prevalent and heavily promoted by DNR, public response seldom materializes in action without DNR's proactive involvement with communities and landowners. The Firewise program has proven effective and yields self-reliant local preparation for wildfires. Cost-shared contracts for forest health/fuel reduction treatments have resulted in thousands of acres improved, accompanied by landowner investment in reducing wildfire risk.

What are the consequences of adopting or not adopting this package?

DNR will have improved ability to aggressively attack wildfires to strive to contain wildfires to ten acres or less during all but the most active periods of fire occurrence. Additional staffing will enable an increased number of engines and helicopters to be staffed during lightning episodes and increase the response capability during elevated burning periods when additional suppression forces are required. A reduced number of large fires will lower the risk of loss of life, property/community damage, and loss of timber resources. Fewer fires escaping initial attack will decrease suppression costs which often require DNR to submit supplemental requests for additional GF-S funding to the legislature.

Reducing wildfire hazards around communities and in forested landscapes also benefits public safety and public funds. With more community engagement in creating defensible spaces around structures, firefighters will be more likely to succeed in structural protection. As more landowners address overstocked forest stands in poor health, and reduce wildfire ladder fuels, firefighters will be more likely to contain fires to smaller areas of acres burned.

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

NOTE: All the staff listed below will be ongoing starting July 1, 2016 and include ongoing associated costs for goods & services and travel.

A. Preparedness and Rapid Emergency Response Capacity - TOTAL FY 2017 COSTS: \$17,926,000

1. Grant Program FY 2017 costs: \$6,131,000

Grants - \$6,000,000 (decreases in FY 2018)

- 1.0 FTE Grant Specialist - Natural Resource Specialist (NRS2) - \$131,000 (includes \$9,000 in one-time costs for workstation and computer).

*Starting in FY 2018, and each year thereafter, annual grant costs will decrease to an estimated \$3,000,000 for an ongoing cost of \$3,122,000 each year.

2. Rapid Deployment Task Force FY 2017 Costs: \$3,204,000

- 3.0 FTEs (WMS1) will add Senior Fire Commanders in acutely fire-prone regions to coordinate local and regional fire response - \$523,000 (includes \$104,000 in one-time costs for workstations, computers & 3 vehicles).

- 6.0 FTEs Local Wildfire Response Leaders (NRS2) will provide localized, hands-on supervision and incident command for resources at the region unit level - \$941,000 (includes \$208,000 in one-time costs for workstations, computers & 6 vehicles).

- 8.0 FTEs Wildfire Resource Supervisors (NRS1) will directly supervise fire engines and other responding resources during initial attack - \$1,177,000 (includes \$279,000 in one-time costs for workstations, computers & 8 vehicles).

- 1.0 FTE Wildfire Fiscal Accountability Specialist (WMS1) will provide expert oversight and counsel to maximize cost-effectiveness of suppression activities and to guard against waste, unjustified expenses, or fraud - \$149,000 (includes \$9,000 in one-time costs for workstation and computer).

- 1.0 FTE Logistics Dispatcher (NRS3) will procure logistical resources for initial attack and large fire needs - \$138,000 (includes \$9,000 in one-time costs for workstation and computer)

- 1.0 FTE Wildfire Intelligence Coordinator (NRS3) will standardize and compile reports of resource availability, needs, and gaps in critical resource categories - \$138,000 (includes \$9,000 in one-time costs for workstation and computers).

- 1.0 FTE Fire Response Coordinator (NRS3) will facilitate coordination among DNR, federal, and local dispatch centers - \$138,000 (includes \$9,000 in one-time costs for workstation and computer).

*Starting in FY 2018, and each year thereafter, costs will decrease to an estimated \$2,577,000 each year.

2a. Expanded Aerial Firefighting Capacity FY 2017 Costs: \$443,000

- 3.0 FTE Aviation Assistant Division Manager & Aviation Dispatchers (1 WMS2 & 2 NRS3) for programmatic supervision of both DNR and contracted aviation fire suppression resources - \$443,000 (includes \$28,000 in one-time costs for workstations and computers).

*Starting in FY 2018, and each year thereafter, costs will decrease to an estimated \$415,000 each year.

2b. Emergency Communication Equipment FY 2017 Costs: \$1,200,000 (these are one-time costs)

3. Coordinated Wildfire Training FY 2017 Costs: \$6,948,000

Training Program costs \$5,700,000 (decreases in FY 2018)

- 7.0 FTEs Fire Training Specialist & Fire District Support Coordinators (NRS3) will coordinate interagency training among state, local, tribal and federal partners. They will facilitate regional training programs that include direct assistance to local fire districts to achieve wildfire training and equipment standards - \$1,116,000
 - 1.0 FTE Grant Specialist (NRS2) will proactively enroll and provide training for wildfire suppression contractors (particularly heavy equipment operators and other local resources) prior to the start of fire season - \$132,000
- (These costs include \$227,000 in one-time costs for workstations, computers & 6 vehicles).

*Starting in FY 2018, and each year thereafter, annual training program costs will decrease to an estimated \$3,000,000 for an ongoing cost of \$4,021,000 each year.

B. Wildfire Prevention and Fuels Reduction - TOTAL FY 2017 COSTS: \$6,353,000

Contracts - \$500,000 (ongoing)

Fuel Reduction & Forest Health Private Lands - \$2,000,000 (ongoing)

Fuel Reduction & Forest Health Trust Lands - \$2,000,000 (ongoing)

Prevention and Fuels Reduction Staffing - \$1,853,000 (includes \$416,000 in one-time costs for workstations, computers and 12 vehicles)

- 3.0 FTEs Wildfire Prevention Coordinators (NRS3) will implement Firewise, wildfire prevention education, and other community outreach programs, and coordinate the grants and contracts that help landowners reduce fire fuels.
- 4.0 FTEs Stewardship Foresters (NRS2) will serve as local contacts who provide information and technical assistance to landowners regarding effective fuel reduction techniques, and administer contracts to accomplish grant-funded work.
- 5.0 FTEs Fire Wardens (NRS1) will patrol fire-prone areas to ensure landowner compliance with grant and contract requirements, burn permit conditions, and industrial fire precaution levels.

*Starting in FY 2018, and each year thereafter, costs will decrease to an estimated \$5,937,000 each year.

Agency administration cost will require 5.0 FTE starting in FY 2017 and is calculated at 27% and shown as Object T.

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

The one-time costs include computers for new staff, vehicles and \$1.2 million for the radio communications systems maintenance and upgrades. All other costs are ongoing.

<u>Object Detail</u>	<u>FY 2016</u>	<u>FY 2017</u>	<u>Total</u>
A Salaries And Wages		2,528,000	2,528,000
B Employee Benefits		1,012,000	1,012,000
E Goods\Other Services		16,929,000	16,929,000
G Travel		207,000	207,000
J Capital Outlays		2,192,000	2,192,000
T Intra-Agency Reimbursements		1,411,000	1,411,000
Total Objects		24,279,000	24,279,000