

FOREST HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHARTER

I. BACKGROUND

Forest health conditions in Washington State have been in decline for decades and the consequences of such conditions have contributed to uncharacteristically severe wildfires and a degradation in ecosystem functions. Wildfire risks have been high statewide, but are particularly acute in eastern Washington. Additional pressures on our forests across the state include insects, disease, drought, invasive species, and human development. Forest conditions are further affected by climate change, past management practices, and a lack of adequate active management. The result has been loss of valuable forest resources and forest ecosystems functions such as clean water, carbon sequestration, fish and wildlife habitat. Without significant intervention this trend will continue.

With this in mind, the 2017 Legislature passed Senate Bill 5546 (codified in part at RCW 76.06.200) establishing a forest health advisory committee to assist the department in the development and implementation of a method ‘to proactively and systematically address the forest health issues facing the state’. The 2020 Legislature passed House Bill 1168, reinforcing the role of Forest Health Advisory Committee (FHAC) and providing further direction to guide agency engagement with the Committee.

II. NAME

This Charter refers to the Forest Health Advisory Committee as “the Committee.”

III. AUTHORITY

RCW 76.06.200(3)(b) creates a Forest Health Advisory Committee, passed into law during the legislative session of 2017.

The Commissioner of Public Lands, Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) chartered the Committee. The Commissioner serves as the state of Washington's lead for all forest health issues under RCW 76.06.150(1).

IV. MISSION

Contribute to the improvement of forest health by providing guidance and advice to the Commissioner of Public Lands on forest health conditions and solutions thereby helping to make Washington forests, regardless of ownership, healthier and more resilient to insects, disease, invasive species, catastrophic wildfire, and other disturbance. Specifically, this committee helps to inform successful implementation of the 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan: Eastern Washington and Washington’s Forest Action Plan.

V. VALUE STATEMENT

The Forest Health Advisory Committee, through collaborative leadership, with input from constituent groups, strives to continually improve and maintain the health and resilience of Washington’s forests for current and future generations.

VI. DEFINITION

RCW 76.06.020(6) establishes a definition of “forest health” to mean the condition of a forest being sound in ecological function, sustainable, resilient, and resistant to insects, disease, fire, and other disturbance, and having the capacity to meet landowner objectives.

The 2020 Washington State Forest Action Plan further defines “forest health” as the condition of a forest ecosystem reflecting its ability to sustain characteristic structure, function and processes; resilience to fire, insects, and other disturbance mechanisms; adaptability to changing climate and increased drought stress; and capacity to provide ecosystem services to meet landowner objectives and human needs.

VII. ORGANIZATION

The Chair and committee members represent key groups or constituent entities who are determined as appropriate and appointed by the Commissioner. In addition, the DNR will provide administrative support.

The Committee provides recommendations to and advises the Commissioner.

The Committee may create Work Groups and Technical Subcommittees as necessary in order to further explore, develop or address a specific issue or task. These Work Groups and Technical Subcommittees will sunset upon completion of their assignment or the project.

VIII. COMPOSITION

The Committee is composed of members representing specified groups or constituents defined in RCW 76.06.200(3)(b), or as appointed by and serving at the pleasure of the Commissioner. Members are appointed for a term of two-years and are eligible for re-appointment following each two year term. The following positions comprise the Committee:

A. The Committee Chair

DNR’s Forest Resiliency Strategic Advisor, or other DNR Forest Resiliency Division leadership as designated by the Commissioner.

B. Committee Members

The committee may include, but is not limited to the following members, and all committee members serve within the authorities of their represented constituent groups and organizations.

Committee membership shall include representation from the following constituent groups, including:

- Large private industrial landowners
- Small forest landowners
- Wildland fire response organizations
- Milling and log transportation industries
- Forest collaboratives that may exist in the affected areas
- Highly affected communities and community preparedness organizations
- Members of conservation groups
- Human health organizations
- Environmental justice organizations
- Forest health technical assistance organizations
- Academic institutions and academic partners
- Conservation Districts
- County and local government representatives
- State and Federal Agencies
- Tribes
- Other interested parties deemed appropriate by the Commissioner.

Current membership can be found in Appendix A, and is updated annually by the Committee Chair.

C. Strategic Partners

- The Commissioner may appoint additional members to the Committee when the Commissioner determines it is appropriate to assist in developing and implementing the Committee's mission.
- Additional subject matter expertise may be utilized when it will further the Committee's knowledge or understanding of a specific topic.

D. Work Group and Technical Subcommittee Membership

Work Groups and Technical Subcommittees shall be chaired by existing members of the Council, with direct support from DNR staff.

As appropriate, additional members or subject matter experts may be nominated to serve on Council Work Groups or Technical Subcommittees, while not serving as appointed members of the Forest Health Advisory Council as a whole. Work Group and Technical Subcommittee members may be solicited from among Council member organizations, or additional external strategic partners and will serve for the duration of that work group.

IX. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Committee Chair

- Provides leadership for the Committee. Includes assigning the Committees' work, monitoring assignments, and guidance to annual work planning.

- Facilitates Council meetings as Chair and moves business actions forward.
- Delivers recommendations in the form of written and oral communications on behalf of the Committee to the Commissioner.
- As needed, facilitate consultation between the Committee and relevant local, state and federal agencies and tribes and other interested parties.

B. Committee Coordinator

- Coordinating directly with Committee Chair, develops and plans meeting agendas and identifies key meeting objectives.
- Conducts outreach to committee members to coordinate the development of recommendations and committee work plans.
- Facilitates committee meetings, and the establishment and coordination of work groups and technical subcommittees as they are deemed necessary.

C. Committee Members

- Support the Council’s communications and interactions to advise the Commissioner on matters relating to forest health conditions in the state.
- Keep apprised of trends and conditions influencing the health of Washington’s forests.
- Identify and/or review recommendations for best management practices to improve or sustain forest health; advise on processes and programs to facilitate development of the physical, economic and human infrastructure necessary to establish a sustainable, long-term forest health treatment program.
- Provide creative and proactive solutions to ensure long-term success of the Committee’s mission; work to thoroughly understand the context and specifics of an issue and consider a range of alternatives when developing recommendations.
- Provide input and recommendations for the assessment and treatment framework developed pursuant to RCW 76.06.200, and the report by the Department described below.
- Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the treatments outlined in the department’s Assessment and Treatment Framework and Forest Health Tracker.
- Assist with review of periodic revisions to the 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan: Eastern Washington and State Forest Action Plan.
- Report Committee activities and dissemination information to constituents and represented organizations.
- Other duties related to forest health issues in the state as requested by the Commissioner.

C. The Department

- By December 1 of each even-numbered year, the Commissioner (with Committee input) will provide a written report to the appropriate committees of the legislature and OFM on the department’s progress in implementing the assessment and treatment framework contained in RCW 76.06.200 and relation to the department’s 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan: Eastern Washington. The report will include:
 - Recommended barriers to be addressed and alternative strategies to more effectively implement the framework and achieve the treatment goals;

- An analysis of necessary funding to develop and implement the framework and treatment recommendations in the following biennium;
- Costs and outcomes of treatments carried out in the preceding biennium.
- The current condition of Washington’s forests. The report will include any potential threats to forest landscapes and the nature, extent, and location of these threats, and recommend strategies to address them.
- Develop and implement assessment and treatment framework described in RCW 76.06.200, and as incorporated in the department’s 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan: Eastern Washington.
- Provide staff support for relevant Technical Sub-committees and Work groups.
- Keep members apprised of and identify opportunities to partner and/or work in concert with the following organizations and committees when in alignment:
 - WADNR Wildland Fire Advisory Committee (WFAC)
 - WA Prescribed Fire Council
 - WA Fire Adapted Community Learning Network
 - WADNR Community Forestry Council (WCFC)
 - Forest Stewardship Council

X. MEETINGS AND GUIDELINES

A. Meetings/Conference Calls

- The Committee will meet at the call of the committee chair, but will typically meet quarterly.
- Efforts will be made to provide phone or video conferencing for the meeting.

B. Operating Guidelines

- The Committee serves under RCW 76.06.200(3)(b) and advises the Commissioner.
- The Committee will not be operational, set policy, or function as a political arm of the Department.
- Committee meeting operations will be governed by Roberts Rules of Order to conduct business and discussion.
- The Committee will endeavor to make recommendations through consensus. If consensus cannot be achieved, a simple majority will rule with any dissent documented in meeting notes.
- The Department will provide Committee members a minimum of 15 days advance notice of meeting place, date, time, and agenda. All effort will be made to provide materials at least five days prior to the meeting.
- The Department will provide note-taking capabilities:
 - Summary notes of committee meetings will record attendance, Committee actions and work assignments.
 - Summaries of previous meetings will be reviewed, amended (as necessary) and approved by the Committee.
- Meeting preparation may require outside reading or research prior to the meeting.
- Each Committee member is selected for specific talents or credentials. Alternates may attend committee meetings, as the subject matter requires, and with prior communication with the Committee Chair and Coordinator.

- If the attendance of a committee member is not possible, prior notification to the Committee Chair or Coordinator is appreciated.
- Committee members serve without compensation.
- The Chair will solicit recommendations for New Business to be included for consideration on the agenda of the next meeting.

XI. APPROVAL

This Charter is effective as of the date of approval by the Commissioner of Public Lands



Hilary S. Franz
Commissioner of Public Lands

February 25, 2022

Date