



WASHINGTON STATE DEPT OF  
**NATURAL  
RESOURCES**

**HILARY S. FRANZ**  
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS



# WASHINGTON WILDLAND FIRE SUMMIT

Meeting Summary

## ABSTRACT

Over 120 leaders, partners, and stakeholders in Washington wildland fire management convened on January 31, 2018 to launch a comprehensive review of the state's wildland fire management, which will culminate in a strategic wildfire plan. This document summarizes key themes from speakers, two panels, and 14 small group discussions regarding a vision for Washington wildland fire management. The discussions included identification of current practices that are working well and key resources and changes needed to improve wildland fire outcomes around the state.

Patricia Tillmann

## Overview

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The Washington Wildland Fire Summit was held Wednesday, January 31, 2018 from 1 to 5 PM at the South Sound Event Center in Tumwater, Washington. Over 120 leaders, partners, and stakeholders in Washington wildland fire management participated (see *Appendix A. Attendees and Panelists*) in the day's events, which included:

- **Opening remarks** from Commissioner of Public Lands, Hilary Franz, and State Representative Tom Dent.
- **Presentations** on recent wildfire trends and the process that will be used to develop the Washington Wildland Fire Protection Strategic Plan.
- **An initial panel**, comprised of seven representatives from The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, federal and state agencies, and Commissioner Franz, and facilitated by Gerry Day, Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Panelists shared their vision for what successful wildland fire management looks like in Washington and the role of their agency or jurisdiction in contributing to that success.
- **Small group discussions** to reflect on the Panel #1 discussion, share a vision for wildland fire management, and discuss what is working well—and what could be improved—in wildland fire prevention, preparation, response, and recovery. There were 14 small group discussions, with 8-10 summit attendees at each table.
- **A final panel**, comprised of six practitioners and community representatives with knowledge and expertise in wildland fire prevention, preparation, response, and recovery, and facilitated by Annie Schmidt, Grindstone Environmental Services. Panelists represented the key themes from the small group discussions in a conversation about what is working well in Washington wildland fire management, and key changes and resources needed to improve wildland fire outcomes.
- **Closing remarks** from Commissioner Franz.

All presentations and panel discussions were recorded, and key themes from small group discussions were captured on flipcharts at each table. *Appendix B* lists the question prompts for panels and the small group discussions. Key themes on the following topics are summarized below:

- A vision for Washington Wildland Fire Management
- What is working well in Washington Wildland Fire Management
- Key changes and resources needed to improve wildland fire outcomes in Washington

## A Vision for Washington Wildland Fire Management

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- There is widespread agreement on the need to **shift the current paradigm** of wildland fire management. However, the system is not broken—it is taxed and needs improvement.
- The entire wildland fire community needs to come together around development of the strategic plan so it is truly an **“all hands, all lands”** approach to wildland fire management in Washington.
- Like the National Cohesive Strategy and approach, the vision needs to address **all aspects of the wildland fire problem** – managing vegetation and fuels, protecting communities and other values at risk, reducing human-caused fires, and providing safe, effective wildland fire response. In particular, increased attention to forest health, prevention, post-fire landslides and flooding, and post-fire recovery is needed. Consider including “putting fire to work for us” as part of the vision.

- We are a united front. Fire cuts **across jurisdictional boundaries**, and our approach needs to reflect that reality.
- **Partnerships** are more important than ever before. Every effort needs to be made to facilitate, encourage, and implement consistent and effective communication and relationships between and within agencies responsible for responding to wildfire, and with the communities they serve.
- See **communities** as a resource to improve fire outcomes and involve them before, during, and after wildfire. Year-round community engagement, coordination, and collaboration that translates to tangible gains on the ground is also needed to build community capacity. Year-round engagement has the additional benefit of building whole-community resilience and capacity on other issues.
- The strategic plan should be **actionable** and tied to tangible changes on the ground. It should not sit on a shelf.

## What is Working Well in Washington Wildland Fire Management

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- There are many good **models and learning experiences** to provide the basis for developing and implementing improvements.
- Wildfire **response** has improved and **inter-agency coordination** is better.
- **Smokey the Bear** can still be useful. Consider changing the messaging to convey “some fire is okay sometimes” and including messages in multiple languages.

## Key Changes and Resources Needed to Improve Wildland Fire Outcomes

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- The existing **jurisdictional and policy frameworks** constrain opportunities for change. In some cases, trust in the state and federal agencies responsible for responding to wildfire is lacking.
- There is a lack of **funding for a proactive approach** to managing vegetation, addressing human-caused fires, and protecting structures and other values at risk.
- **Succession planning** is needed in wildland fire organizations. As experienced professionals move toward retirement, there is a dearth of qualified professionals to take their place.
- Better **training** for all firefighters (not just DNR and U.S. Forest Service) is needed.
- Current **financial incentives** can draw firefighting resources away from where they are needed most.
- While inter-agency communication has improved in wildfire response, inefficiencies and barriers remain to effective **coordination across agencies**. For example, internal decision makers and those who communicate externally need more effective coordination processes and mechanisms.
- The issue of **unprotected lands** (areas where no jurisdiction has firefighting responsibility) needs to be addressed.
- Increased flexibility and ability to implement **local solutions** could lead to more consistent community protection. Funding and resources for wildfire response for small counties and communities is also needed.
- More communication and coordination among **communities**, including across demographic and language barriers is needed.
- Increased attention and resources for wildfire **prevention** are needed. This includes awareness raising of the value of prevention, community education about how to prevent and prepare for wildfire, increased staffing and funding for prevention efforts, managing rural lands to prevent fire, and devoting forest health efforts to support wildfire prevention. Changes to federal land management such as increasing prescribed burns and post-fire flooding are especially needed.

## Appendix A. Attendees and Panelists

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<sup>1</sup>Moderator for small group discussion | <sup>2</sup>Notetaker for small group discussion

### Panelists

- Gary Berndt, WA DNR
- Linda Clark, U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- Gerry Day, WA DNR (facilitator)
- Cody Desautel, The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
- Hilary Franz, WA DNR
- Reese Lolley, The Nature Conservancy<sup>1</sup>
- Lauren Maloney, BLM/Forest Service<sup>1</sup>
- Jay McLaughlin, Mt. Adams Resource Stewards<sup>1</sup>
- Randy Johnson, Spokane County Fire District 4<sup>1</sup>
- Dave LaFave, Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue
- Chuck LeBlanc, Washington State Patrol - State Fire Marshal's Office
- Molly Linville, Washington Cattlemen's Association<sup>1</sup>
- Jim Peña, USDA Forest Service
- Annie Schmidt, Grindstone Environmental Services (facilitator)
- Bodie Shaw, U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs

### Project Team and DNR Event Staff

- Michelle Argyropoulos, WA DNR<sup>2</sup>
- Caroline Burney, Cascadia Consulting Group
- Marc Daudon, The Caspian Group, LLC<sup>1</sup>
- Megan Duffy, WA DNR
- Brent Edgar, Cascadia Consulting Group<sup>2</sup>
- Richy Harrod, Harrod Forestry Consulting
- Marcea Kato, WA DNR<sup>2</sup>
- Lynn Knapp, Cascadia Consulting Group
- Bill Mills, WA DNR
- Janet Pearce, WA DNR
- Katie Peterschick, WA DNR<sup>2</sup>
- P.J. Tillmann, Cascadia Consulting Group
- Loren Torgerson, WA DNR
- Chuck Turley, WA DNR
- Lacey Vaughn, WA DNR<sup>2</sup>

### Attendees

- Anita Ahumada, Commission on Hispanic Affairs
- Lylianna Allala, Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal
- Carlene Anders, Okanogan Co. Long Term Recovery Group
- Ryan Anderson, Washington RC&D
- Benjamin Andrews, Clallam County Fire District No.3
- Karen Arnold, WA DNR<sup>1</sup>
- Greg Bailey
- Carolyn Berglund, Hidden Valley / Swauk Fire Adapted Community
- Gary Berndt, WA DNR
- Eric Bieker, Western Pacific Timber, LLC
- Hailey Blankenship, Board for Volunteer Firefighters
- Jerry Bonagofsky, Washington Contract Loggers Association
- Robert Bradley, Washington State Association of Fire Marshals
- Chris Branch, Okanogan County
- Stephanie Burns, WA DNR
- Sue Bush, Washington Department of Social & Health Services
- James Caruso, Stevens County
- Hannah Clark, Washington Association of Land Trusts

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- Lonnie Click, Benton County Fire District #1
- Bonita "Bonnie" Cobb, Spokane County Fire District #5, Four Mound Firewise
- Isaac Colgan, Lummi Island Scenic Estates
- Tim Cook, Washington State Emergency Management Division
- Tony Craven, Suncadia, Cle Elum
- Anna Daggett, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Paul Dahmer, WA DNR
- Mark Doumit, Washington Forest Protection Association
- Rich Elliott, Kittitas Valley Fire & Rescue, International Association of Fire Chiefs
- Anthony Engel, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest
- Rafael Estevez, Washington State Emergency Management
- Roger Ferris, Washington Fire Commissioners Association
- Mitch Friedman, Conservation Northwest
- Brian Gales, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Melissa Gannie, Washington State Patrol - State Fire Marshal's Office
- Melissa Garvey, The Nature Conservancy
- Robert Gear, City of Pasco
- John Giller, BLM
- Keith Goehner, Chelan County
- Peter Goldman, Washington Forest Law Center
- Maurice Goodall, Okanogan Department of Emergency Management
- James Graham, Cowlitz 2 Fire and Rescue
- Jay Guthrie, WA DNR<sup>1</sup>
- Steve Harris, WA DNR<sup>1</sup>
- Heath Heikkia, American Forest Resources Council
- Lee Hemmer, Hemmer Ranches
- Jerry Holm, Forest Ridge Wildfire Coalition
- Dan Holman, Flowery Trail Community Association
- Bob Johnson, WA DNR
- David Johnson, East Jefferson Fire and Rescue
- Larry Johnson, USDA - Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Leonard Johnson, Grays Harbor Fire District 2
- Micah Johnson, Olympic National Forest
- Norby Johnson, Washington State Council of Fire Fighters (WSCFF)
- Shana Joy, State Conservation Commission
- Kara Karboski, Washington Prescribed Fire Council
- Jamie Kingsbury, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest
- Julie Knobel, WA DNR<sup>1</sup>
- Tabitha Laird, Washington State Emergency Management Division
- Wyatt Leighton, WA DNR
- Beverly Li
- Tim Logozzo Sr, Washington Contract Firefighters Association
- Tim McKern, Central Mason Fire and EMS
- Kevin McMahan, Washington National Guard
- Ken McNamee, WA DNR<sup>1</sup>
- Don Melton, WA DNR<sup>1</sup>
- Dale Mitchell Mitchell, Washington Fire Leadership Forum
- Phil Mosher, Chelan County FPD 6
- Al Murphy
- Steve North, Thurston County Fire District 9
- Kelly O'Brien, Chelan County Fire District #3
- Elaine Oneil, Washington Farm Forestry Association

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- Laura Osiadacz, Kittitas County
- Richard Parrish, BLM
- Jim Passage, Lake Wenatchee Fire & Rescue
- Ben Peeler, Clark County Fire & Rescue
- Russ Pfeiffer-Hoyt, WSSDA Trust Lands Task Force
- Philip Rigdon, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Karen Ripley, USDA Forest Service (USFS)
- Katherine Rowden, National Weather Service / NOAA
- Julie Sackett
- Scott Sargent, WA DNR
- Andrew Schaffran, Washington State Fire Fighters Association
- Annie Schinnell, Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition
- Aaron Schmidt, WA DNR<sup>1</sup>
- Chris Schulte, City of Connell/Pacific Northwest IMT 2
- Rose Shriner, Kittitas County Conservation District
- Ron Shultz, Washington State Conservation Commission
- Kent Sisson, Chelan County
- Bill Slosson, Washington State Fire Marshal's Office
- Frankie Small, Lummi Island Scenic Estates
- Dan Smith, North Kitsap Fire & Rescue
- Andrew Spaeth, Sustainable Northwest
- Michael Stanford, Lake Wenatchee Fire & Rescue
- Jim Stoffer, Sequim School District & WSSDA DA 4 Legislative Rep
- Matt Stoutenburg, Office of the Insurance Commissioner
- Lorah Super, Okanogan Conservation District
- Donald Svetich, Quilcene Fire Rescue
- Skip Swenson, Forterra
- Andy Swokowski, Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner
- Michael Tobin, North Yakima Conservation District
- Deb Wadkins, Lake Wenatchee Fire & Rescue
- Jeff Wainwright, WSCFF
- Jim Walkowski, East Jefferson Fire & Rescue / Washington Fire Chiefs
- Erin Ward, FEMA Region
- Todd Welker, WA DNR
- Michael White, WSCFF
- K.C Whitehouse, WSCFF
- Darron Williams, BIA
- Eric Wisch, WA DNR
- Keith Wright, Washington State Fire Chiefs Association
- Steve Wright, South Kitsap Fire & Rescue

## Appendix B. Panel and Small Group Discussion Prompts

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Panel facilitators and table moderators drew from the following questions to facilitate discussion during the two panels and 14 small group discussions.

### Panel #1: Vision for Washington Wildland Fire Management

1. Most are in agreement changes are needed in all areas of wildfire prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. Five or 10 years down the road, what does success look like to you?
2. What can your agency or jurisdiction most contribute to this vision of success?
  - a. The need to work together, across boundaries, to manage our risks has been highlighted today - and has been a theme for the past decade. What is your agency or jurisdiction's role in making this collaborative future a reality?
  - b. What do you see as the hallmarks of successful collaboration among the many entities responsible for managing landscapes before, during, and after wildfire?
3. When considering the changes in wildfire management that you are all describing (e.g. living with wildfire as opposed to suppressing all wildfire), what do you see as the biggest challenges for your agency or jurisdiction?
  - a. What can your agency or jurisdiction most contribute to addressing these challenges?
  - b. What is your agency or jurisdiction's collaborative role in addressing these challenges?
4. We heard in Richy's presentation that the fire season is growing longer and more intense, and that pressures from changing water and climate regimes, land development, and in some cases past management practices, further stress the health of our forest ecosystems and the ability to manage wildfire on the landscape. How can your agency, jurisdiction, interest group, or colleagues adapt to changing conditions and support improved wildland fire outcomes? What key challenges do you need to overcome to get there?
  - a. How do you see the role of managed fire (sometimes known as fire for resource benefit) evolving in the future?
  - b. Some areas of the state, such as parts of the Columbia Basin, have no dedicated fire response entity. Thinking about the vision you articulated, what are the key changes we need – as a state – to better address wildfire prevention, preparation, response, and recovery on these "unprotected lands"?
  - c. Communities and the firefighters who protect them are on the front lines of wildfire impacts. For example, communities in central and eastern Washington are increasingly faced with the threat of wildfire. How might the role of your agency, the agencies you represent, or your jurisdiction evolve in working with and supporting fire-adapted communities and firefighters in the future?
  - d. One of the challenges we face in the state is to have the resources necessary at any given time to respond effectively to suppress wildfire. This is the result of shrinking budgets and the demographics of the firefighting force, among other factors. As we've heard, there is increasing risk of more intense and frequent wildfires in the future. What is your vision for addressing limited firefighting resources?

## Small Group Discussions

1. What inspired you about the discussion of new approaches and a vision for success panelists articulated earlier, if anything? What concerned you, if anything?
  - a. Do you see your role or the role of your community in this future?
2. What is your personal vision for improved wildland fire outcomes? How can you or your community most contribute to this vision of success?
3. Overall, what is working well with respect to wildfire in Washington right now? Why?
  - a. What are the best examples of innovations in improving wildland fire outcomes?
  - b. Thinking about your role and community specifically, what are the greatest assets you have to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from wildfire?
4. Thinking about wildfire across the state, what could be improved with respect to wildfire in Washington right now? Why?
  - a. What are the most significant challenges you face in preparing for wildfire? In responding to wildfire? In recovering from wildfire?
5. What changes are necessary across the state to meet the challenge of longer fire seasons?
  - a. What changes do you or your community need to make?
6. In large part, we have highlighted our wildfire risk in areas bordering unhealthy forests or large natural areas. Yet, recent California fires, and even our own recent fire seasons, have demonstrated fire can intrude deep into the heart of communities, beyond the traditional "interface." How should we – collectively and in our individual communities – be adjusting to face this new reality?
7. Occasionally, people say the way Smokey Bear is understood culturally or used by organizations does not recognize the important role fire plays in the landscape. Has the Smokey Bear campaign outlived its usefulness? Why or why not? What role might Smokey play in the context of prescribed fire?
8. State mobilization is often identified as needing improvement to better address wildfire in the state. How effective do you feel State Mobilization has been in your area? Are there ways State Mobilization could be improved? Why or why not?
9. Some areas of the state, such as parts of the Columbia Basin, have no dedicated fire response entity. Do you have "unprotected lands" (areas outside of all fire protection jurisdictions) adjacent to your community? Has that been an issue for you and your neighbors? Why or why not?



## Panel #2: Foundations and Framework for Success of a New Vision for Washington Wildland Fire Management

1. Thinking about your small group discussion, the panel earlier this afternoon, and your own experience and expertise, what is working well with respect to wildfire in Washington right now? What could be improved? Why?
  - a. What are the top 2-3 gaps in wildfire preparedness, prevention, response, and recovery?
  - b. What are the best examples of innovations in improving wildland fire outcomes?
  - c. What opportunities do you see on the horizon that would enhance wildfire management in Washington? What about threats on the horizon?
2. Thinking about your small group discussion, the panel earlier this afternoon, and your own experience and expertise, if you could make only 3 changes to Washington wildfire management, what would they be?
  - a. Are there policies and regulations that need to change to improve wildland fire outcomes in Washington? If so, what are they? Why or why not?
  - b. To provide sufficient firefighting capacity during wildfire season, some organizations supplement their permanent firefighting force with those who are working in other areas of the organization. What are the pros and cons of this model of staffing wildfire suppression operations? What needs to change?
  - c. What opportunities do you see to reduce human-caused ignitions?
  - d. What investments in modifying vegetation and fuels are needed to make the biggest difference in improving wildland fire outcomes?
  - e. What changes are necessary to meet the challenge of more intense and longer fire seasons?
  - f. What resources, skills, or expertise are needed to support these changes?