



# WASHINGTON STATE WILDLAND FIRE PROTECTION 10-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

Solutions for a  
Prepared, Safe, Resilient  
Washington



**NATURAL  
RESOURCES**

HILARY S. FRANZ  
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS

# ALL WASHINGTON PREPARED, SAFE, RESILIENT



## WILDFIRE IS ON THE RISE IN WASHINGTON

### We have a wildfire crisis in our state

Hotter, drier summers and longer fire seasons — combined with unhealthy forests — have led to increases in fire starts and areas burned. Fires in 2014 and 2015 burned nearly 1.5 million acres of public and private forestlands and cost more than \$500 million to suppress. In 2018, DNR responded to more than 1,800 wildfires, a record high. DNR kept 93% of fires under its jurisdiction to 10 acres or less. But 440,000 acres still burned across our state.

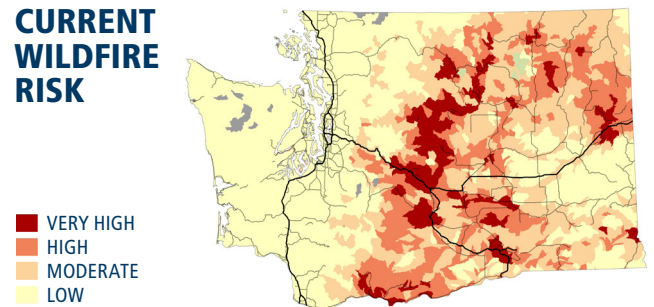
In Washington, some 2.2 million homes are exposed to wildfire. And the threat will increase without significant action.

Our state's local, state, tribal, and federal wildland firefighters heroically step-up to defend our communities each year. But our state's fire response system remains under-resourced and in need of improvement.

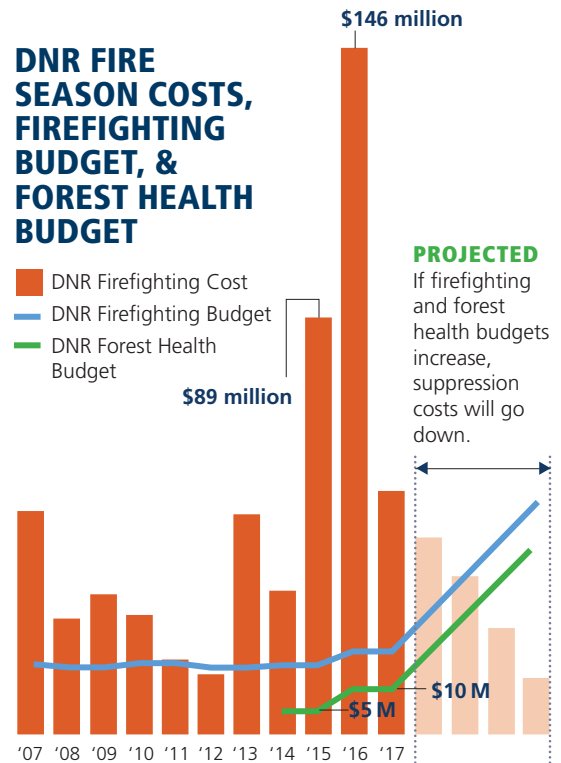
If we are to reduce the impact of wildfire, we need to rise to the challenge of creating a Washington with healthy, resilient landscapes, fire-adapted communities, and world-class wildland fire response capability.

### Risks and costs are increasing

#### CURRENT WILDFIRE RISK



#### DNR FIRE SEASON COSTS, FIREFIGHTING BUDGET, & FOREST HEALTH BUDGET



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## VISION

### All Washington — safely managing and adapting to wildfire.

Working collaboratively across jurisdictional boundaries and with engaged communities, we safeguard what we value. All of Washington is adapted and prepared, and our landscapes are healthy and resilient. We prevent wildland fire, use fire where allowable, and safely suppress unwanted fire.

**IT'S TIME FOR BOLD, FORWARD-THINKING INVESTMENTS TO REDUCE WILDFIRES AND RESTORE THE HEALTH OF OUR FORESTS. INACTION IS NOT AN OPTION."**

**HILARY S. FRANZ**  
Commissioner of Public Lands

## OUTCOMES

These goals and strategies will help us achieve better wildland fire outcomes over the long term.



Safety of the public and firefighters is provided for; wildland fire is suppressed when necessary and used where allowable.



Unwanted human-related wildland fires are virtually eliminated.



Costs to suppress wildland fires are reduced; risks and losses to communities and the economy are minimized.



Communities and ecosystems are resilient and healthy; both can withstand and recover from wildland fire.

Learn more: [dnr.wa.gov/StrategicFireProtection](https://dnr.wa.gov/StrategicFireProtection)

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## HIGH PRIORITIES 2019-2020

Implementing the Plan will require collaborative action by the state legislature, partner agencies, tribes, communities, the private sector, and other stakeholders to address the highest risks first and put in place the building blocks that will lead to improved fire outcomes for years to come. Priority actions to successfully launch the Plan are listed here.

### Suppression Priorities

- Add 30 DNR fulltime wildland firefighters
- Add 40 seasonal DNR hand crew firefighters
- Establish an interagency wildland fire training academy
- Establish Executive Level Leadership Committee to implement the Plan
- Increase aerial response capability
- Improve firefighter communications, equipment, and facilities
- Convene a taskforce to develop a sustainable wildland fire management funding mechanism
- Establish a post-fire Burned Area Emergency Response team to address post-fire hazards
- Explore using Authorize Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPA), annexation, and new fire districts to provide adequate protection for all lands
- Authorize the Chief of the Washington State Patrol (WSP) to mobilize suppression resources prior to a wildfire incident

**DNR responded to more than 1,800 wildfires in 2018, a record number.**

### Preparedness Priorities

- Accelerate DNR's 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan
- Revise air quality, smoke, and wildland fire management policies to allow for more prescribed fire
- Expand landowner assistance programs
- Create a Fire Risk Management & Mitigation program at DNR
- Develop a quantitative risk assessment to conduct planning and prioritize resources
- Establish a fire-adapted community coordinator at DNR

**Healthy and prepared landscapes are more resistant to, and better able to withstand, wildfire.**

### Prevention Priorities

- Expand existing wildfire prevention outreach efforts
- Develop and deploy new community engagement methods, including social marketing
- Create capacity to engage limited English proficiency communities

**93% of wildfires last year were human-caused.**

## STRATEGIES SUMMARY

**GOAL 1. WASHINGTON'S PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY SYSTEMS ARE FULLY CAPABLE, INTEGRATED, AND SUSTAINABLE.**

### **S1: PROVIDE LEADERSHIP & COORDINATION TO GUIDE IMPLEMENTATION AND FACILITATE AGENCY ALIGNMENT**

- 1.1** Convene a leadership forum to facilitate the development and alignment of agency efforts to achieve Plan goals.
- 1.2** Assign the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee (WFAC) the responsibility of providing advice on risk planning, prioritizing mitigation resources, and facilitating stakeholder engagement.
- 1.3** Establish regional and local coordinating capacity.

### **S2: USE RISK ASSESSMENT TO INFORM MITIGATION AND PROTECTION PLANNING AND TO ESTABLISH PRIORITIES**

- 2.1** Quantify current and projected wildland fire risk.
- 2.2** Conduct comprehensive risk-mitigation planning to prioritize actions.
- 2.3** Establish a Wildland Fire Risk Management, Mitigation, and Protection Planning program in DNR.

### **S3: ENHANCE AND SUSTAIN A HIGHLY CAPABLE WORKFORCE**

- 3.1** Establish an interagency taskforce to determine the workforce needed for Plan implementation.
- 3.2** Increase capacity of state's wildland fire prevention, preparedness, and recovery workforce.
- 3.3** Increase capacity of the state's wildland fire treatment and response workforce.
- 3.4** Create processes and pathways to better use the existing wildland fire workforce.
- 3.5** Address retention and succession planning issues within the wildland fire workforce.
- 3.6** Provide effective training for the wildland fire management workforce.

### **S4: ADVANCE SUSTAINABLE FUNDING**

- 4.1** Building on the work undertaken for the Joint Legislative Audit Review Committee (JLARC) study, establish the true costs of wildfire in Washington state to better inform resource allocation decisions.
- 4.2** Identify and evaluate alternative sustainable funding mechanisms for resilience and wildland fire suppression.
- 4.3** Convene a taskforce to develop and advance funding strategies.

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## GOAL 2. LANDSCAPES ARE RESILIENT – IN THE FACE OF WILDLAND FIRE, THEY RESIST DAMAGE AND RECOVERY QUICKLY.

### S5: EXPAND PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES TO MANAGE FUELS AND VEGETATION

#### ALL LANDSCAPES

- 5.1 Increase investment in fuels and vegetation management.
- 5.2 Address and resolve barriers to managed natural and prescribed fire.

#### EASTERN WASHINGTON LANDSCAPES

- 5.3 Ensure coordination between Washington State's 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan and Washington's 10-Year Wildland Fire Protection Strategic Plan.
- 5.4 Develop and implement wildland fire mitigation and fuels treatment plans for non-forested landscapes.

#### WESTERN WASHINGTON FORESTS

- 5.5 Develop and implement wildland fire mitigation, adaptation, and response policies and plans for at-risk landscapes and communities in western Washington.

## GOAL 3. COMMUNITIES ARE PREPARED AND ADAPTED FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE WILDLAND FIRE REGIMES.

### S6: ESTABLISH AND SUSTAIN FIRE-ADAPTED COMMUNITIES.

- 6.1 Develop and implement engagement strategies, such as community-based social marketing, that foster behavior change.
- 6.2 Enhance engagement with limited English proficiency communities.
- 6.3 Increase capacity, coordination, and networking of community assistance programs.
- 6.4 Facilitate adoption of land use plans, regulations, and codes that reduce wildland fire risk in the wildland urban interface (WUI).
- 6.5 Mitigate incursions of wildland fire smoke into community airsheds.

### S7: REDUCE HUMAN-RELATED WILDLAND FIRE

- 7.1 Collect and use data to focus prevention efforts in high-risk areas and on high-risk causes.
- 7.2 Increase capacity for prevention planning and implementation.
- 7.3 Enhance, expand, and align education programs, messaging, and regulations.

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## **S8: MEET POST-FIRE RECOVERY NEEDS, BUILDING ON CURRENT CAPACITY AND CAPABILITIES**

- 8.1** Evaluate wildland fire recovery needs and recommend solutions.
- 8.2** Increase public awareness of risks post-wildland fire and facilitate access to resources to mitigate those risks.
- 8.3** Establish a state and private lands Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) team(s) to assess non-federal lands post-fire.

## **GOAL 4. RESPONSE IS SAFE AND EFFECTIVE.**

## **S9: ESTABLISH EFFECTIVE PROTECTION FOR ALL LANDS**

- 9.1** Through legislation, establish Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs) as an option for protection.
- 9.2** Support annexation or creation of a new fire district as an option for protection.
- 9.3** Address under-protected lands by exploring opportunities to consolidate or regionalize fire service in eastern Washington.
- 9.4** Clarify DNR's authority to respond to wildland fires when they are not a threat to forestland and state mobilization has not been approved.

## **S10: IMPROVE RESPONSE PLANNING, OPERATIONS, AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

- 10.1** Conduct cross-boundary "pre-fire response" analysis and planning, including evacuation planning.
- 10.2** Enhance communication during wildland fire response.
- 10.3** Authorize the Chief of the Washington State Patrol (WSP) to mobilize suppression resources prior to a wildfire incident under predefined circumstances.
- 10.4** Invest in robust infrastructure.
- 10.5** Regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of wildland fire protection in western Washington; identify and implement changes as needed.



## THIS PLAN REFLECTS INPUT FROM PRACTITIONERS, EXPERTS, AND THE PUBLIC

To develop this Plan, DNR convened nearly 1,000 people around the state over a six-month period, including practitioners and experts from federal, tribal, state, and local government, landowners, non-profits, and the public.

DNR also consulted extensively with the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee and senior staff of the U.S. Forest Service, State Fire Marshal's Office, and local fire agencies.

Their input, along with the best available science and best practices, provides the basis for the Plan's vision and strategies.

Crucial to achieving success are significant investments in prevention, resilient landscapes, and fire-adapted communities to effectively transition our

state to a future with more manageable, less intense wildland fire. This investment strategy aligns with the 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan for Eastern Washington which calls for treating 1.25 million acres of forest over the next 20 years, an upfront investment designed to create resilient landscapes and reduce wildland fire impacts.

Given the poor health of many of Washington's forested, arid, and other wild lands, and the impacts of a changing climate, these benefits will not occur overnight. More frequent and intense wildland fires and smoke events are likely. Accordingly, the Plan also invests in the workforce, air resources, and facilities for improved response, and identifies solutions to existing operational and policy challenges.

**// THE KNOWLEDGE, EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE OF OUR PARTNERS HAS BEEN KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES WE FACE, AND PREPARING FOR THE CHALLENGES WE WILL FACE IN THE NEAR FUTURE."**

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