To:	Darcy Batura, The Nature Conservancy, Member-Chair, Forest Health Advisory Committee Allen Lebovitz, Wildland Fire and Forest Resilience Liaison, Chair Wildland Fire Advisory Committee
CC:	Committee Members of the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee and Forest Health Advisory Committee Russ Lane, Wildland Fire Management Division Manager Jen Watkins, Forest Resilience Division Manager Loren Torgerson, Wildfire Policy Advisor
From:	George Geissler, State Forester and Deputy, Wildland Fire Management Katie Allen, Deputy Supervisor, Forest Resilience, Regulation and Aquatic Resources
Date:	December 17, 2024
Subject:	Wildfire Response, Forest Restoration, and Community Resilience Account Joint Work Group Tasking Memo
Attachments:	All reference materials are provided in a DNR Box folder including 2021 2SHB 1168 legislation, 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan: Eastern Washington, Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan and the 5-year Review Addendum, 2020 Washington Forest Action Plan, RCW 76.04.505, RCW 76.04.511, 2024 Report on Long-Term Forest Health & Reduction of Wildland Fire Danger (2SHB 1168), HB 1168 public dashboard, and 2022-2023 HB 1168 JWG recommendations and materials.

We request the assistance of a Joint Work Group (JWG) of the Forest Health Advisory Committee (FHAC) and Wildland Fire Advisory Committee (WFAC) to provide recommendations to the agency on 2025-2027 spending priorities for appropriations to the Wildfire Response, Forest Restoration, and Community Resilience Account.

Background

The Washington State Legislature established the Wildfire Response, Forest Restoration, and Community Resilience Account (Account) in 2021 with SHB 1168 to fund the implementation of the Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan, 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan: Eastern Washington. and the State Forest Action Plan. While these plans each have a unique focus, they share objectives around improving the protection, resistance and resilience of Washington's landscapes and communities to wildland fire.

Also, within the legislation the legislature provided the "The department may solicit the forest health advisory committee established in RCW 76.06.200 and wildland fire advisory committee established in RCW 76.04.179 to provide recommendations for investments…"

Task Overview
In November, the Office of Financial Management (OFM) announced the state operating budget is facing a $10-12 billion deficit over the next four fiscal years. The projected budget shortfall requires agencies to consider potential reduction scenarios and how these impact operations and program delivery. Although the FHAC and WFAC have unique charters, they each have the shared goal of maximizing the return on investment of Account funds in the implementation of the priorities outlined by the strategies.

The intent of this task is to engage a Joint Work Group (JWG)[1] of WFAC and FHAC to establish a shared understanding of the priority objectives of both committees and develop recommendations to prioritize investments in the 2025-2027 biennium to meet those objectives under a budget deficit scenario.

Task Outline
The work group will convene in January 2025 and is expected to work through April 2025 unless the timeline is extended as a result of work group decisions as a work plan is adapted. It is anticipated that the workgroup will meet 2-3 times to complete the task, but that will be confirmed as a work plan and timeline is developed by the work group.

With the support of DNR staff and final approval by both FHAC and WFAC, the JWG is tasked to:

- review past and current investments from the Account using data from past biennia and referencing the 2022-23 1168 Work Group outcomes,
- establish a shared understanding of the priority objectives based upon the strategies and legislative direction,
- develop recommendations to prioritize investments in the 2025-2027 biennium based upon those objectives and in response to in response to the Governor's and Legislature's budgets.

Key Deliverables

- Updates on JWG progress presented at FHAC and WFAC meetings.
- A final approved report with work overview addressing the three primary tasks by the end of April 2025 to allow for full FHAC and WFAC review and approval by mid-May 2025.

[1] The work group will be comprised of members from the WFAC and FHAC and/or representation from committee member organizations.