



## Forest Health Advisory Committee

September 13, 2022 | 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

### Meeting Summary

The meeting started with roll-call of committee members and partners. The meeting was recorded and is available to view online at: [https://dnr-wa-gov.zoom.us/rec/share/rXjg-PQocJQZOp6-FIN\\_iZzjdVWKylJ5G2ljw3GOUg\\_hrL-Xc3lJVu7rxWnBCwR.rQe4QN1AJFIYstPQ](https://dnr-wa-gov.zoom.us/rec/share/rXjg-PQocJQZOp6-FIN_iZzjdVWKylJ5G2ljw3GOUg_hrL-Xc3lJVu7rxWnBCwR.rQe4QN1AJFIYstPQ) Passcode: @IvD!Y2j

### Old Business

#### **Monitoring Sub-Group Report-Out by Derek Churchill, DNR Forest Health Scientist**

- Since the release of the 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan: Eastern Washington there has been a significant focus on landscape evaluations and assessing forested conditions across eastern Washington. Now that those methods are well documented and in place the DNR science team is spending more time focusing on monitoring.
- DNR is particularly excited about the change detection work led by forest health scientists. We can now better understand and quantify at multiple scales the changes that occur on the landscape because of wildfires and other disturbance agents.
- Monitoring and treatment stories and information were provided for the forest health legislative report by a number of sister agencies and partners. DNR also hired Resilient Forestry to establish field plots and utilize drone flights to monitor different outcomes associated with treatments in eastern Washington.
- DNR is continuing to evaluate overall treatment goals against our treatment numbers over time. Related to that, there is a keen interest in understanding how we are meeting our landscape restoration and management needs. Have treatments and disturbances moved the forested landscape into a more or less resilient condition? How do we adapt or shift our management focus based on what we are learning? The Committee requested to include this topic on future FHAC meeting agenda.

#### **Environmental Justice Sub-Group Report Out by Ashley Blazina, DNR Environmental Justice and Western WA Planner**

- As part of HB1168 FHAC was identified as a key partner in integrating environmental justice into the development of the new funding account and programs at DNR.
- Members of FHAC, along with other key partners, worked together as part of the sub-group to help assess existing tools, data, and information that could inform a process to integrate environmental justice into program development and funding.
- Based on the work of the sub-group, there isn't a specific tool that helps prioritize environmental justice within the context of forest health and resilience in Washington. This will be an area of additional inquiry and work at DNR and with partners.
- The sub-group developed a number of recommendations including: approaching funding decisions from a systems thinking approach, unsuccessful attempts to reach diverse stakeholders should be followed by internal assessments, and partnering with trusted organizations in a community.

- The environmental justice work occurring in Washington has largely focused on urban populations, however many of our most affected communities by forest resilience are in rural areas. Each community is also different and will face different burdens and challenges.
- Members of the work group asked about how to make these recommendations actionable and integrate into the selection of future projects. There is additional conversation and work on that topic and examples will be provided at the next quarterly meeting. Members of the group shared their appreciation for their work.
- The full environmental justice recommendations were sent out the FHAC in July 2022.

ACTION ITEM: The memo will be re-shared and put on the next quarterly meeting agenda as a decision item.

## **New Business**

### **Forest Resilience Division Update by Jen Watkins, Acting Division Manager**

- The Division is working on the biennial legislative report for the 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan: Eastern Washington. The report will include outcomes associated with HB1168 investments in Planning, Science, and Monitoring; Service Forestry; Federal Lands, and Prescribed Fire and Post-Fire Recovery. Each Section within the Division is supporting different parts of strategic plan implementation. DNR is on track to accomplish or exceed all deliverables in each area identified related to project planning, acres treated, aquatic restoration, timber volume, and roads.
- There are currently 39 priority landscapes in eastern Washington. Every two years, DNR is tasked with looking at existing priority areas and considering whether to add new priority landscapes. DNR is in the process of evaluating additional forested areas for inclusion new priority landscapes.
- DNR is considering nine potential new priority landscapes based on input of partners and landowners. DNR initially maps potential new landscapes as general areas and further refinement occurs to delineate exact boundaries of any new priority landscape. Contact Chuck Hersey at [chuck.hersey@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:chuck.hersey@dnr.wa.gov) to provide input.
- US Forest Service recently released a prescribed fire program review based on the 90-day pause. DNR is evaluating potential impacts of the report. We welcome Committee engagement and input on that moving forward.

### *Committee Member Questions and Discussion:*

- Appreciation for the Service Forestry Program build out for work with private landowners was expressed. A comment was made that the same level of investment on other lands that need forest health treatments would be beneficial.
- A question was raised regarding why there are so many treatments, approximately more than half, occurring outside priority landscapes. In response, DNR staff shared that there was momentum and inertia in a number of places, such as on federal lands, where there was existing commitments to conduct treatments. HB1711 also required prioritization of DNR State Lands and there are slightly different criteria used to evaluate treatment needs on state lands. DNR is working across different parts of the agency, including with Forest Resilience and State Lands, to coordinate priorities and foster as much overlap as possible. In the case of our work with private landowners, the program had been focused on supporting landowners that were interested and where state funding and grants provided opportunities to support treatments. As the program has grown, and priority areas have been identified, there is increasing alignment in geographic focus.

### **Service Forestry Update by Andy Tate, Assistant Division Manager**

- Program build out has been underway for the last year including hiring of a new program manager, new regional coordinators, and Service Foresters in each region to work directly with private landowners to conduct site visits and develop cost-share projects. In Western Washington DNR historically had very

few staff. The build out is going to really help meet the needs of forest landowners on the west-side of the Cascades. As part of this process a new financial assistance program, including cost-share, was developed for the forest types in western Washington, that mirrors DNR's cost-share program in eastern Washington. There is a project in Darrington to pilot the new cost-share approach.

- On the DNR website there is a new Landowner Assistance Portal. [www.dnr.wa.gov/LandownerAssistancePortal](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/LandownerAssistancePortal) The site is live, but new content is still being added. It's a helpful resource to identify the right DNR staff member to contact depending on the needs of the landowner. The website also helps clarify the different parts of the agency that may be working on similar issues across different landownership types. The impetus to create the portal was to make it as easy as possible for members of the public to navigate Service Forestry programs and find the staff member at DNR that can best help them.
- DNR Communications team has partnered with Service Forestry to share this new resource with the public. The release was picked up by a number of news and media outlets across the state.

**ACTION ITEM:** there was a request for the updates about the Service Forestry build-out to be presented to the small forest landowner community.

### **2022 Legislative Session Preview**

- The Committee Chair shared a recap of the Joint Tasking Memo discussion that was co-hosted with the Wildland Fire Advisory Committee (WFAC) in August 2022. WFAC and FHAC have now both received an overview of HB168 and related tasks for the committees to provide input on related to the allocation of resources in the new account. Following the August meeting, DNR staff developed a memo to clarify a process and next steps. The memo was shared in advance of the committee meeting.
- There are three categories of funding requests: 1) DNR carry-forward funds, 2) pass-through funds and programs to support partner work and implementation, and 3) sister state agency requests (i.e. State Parks, WDFW, Conservation Commission). One of the overall goals of this process and categorization is to foster transparency and coordination across agencies and partners that are working to implement the state's forest health and wildfire strategic plans.
- Environmental justice and equity is a key factor in assessing these needs and determining how to prioritize potential investments through the account. The recommendations from the FHAC sub-group will be utilized and this will continue to be a focus of the conversation for the full committee.
- The Commissioner of Public Lands will consider the recommendations of this committee and she will be making the final decision about what to include in the package that is submitted to the legislature.

The current draft Forest Resilience Division budget was presented to the committee. The budget spreadsheet shows the program name, funding request amount, funding requested for pass-through, and a brief description of the deliverables and program outcomes. Each of the line items was described verbally to the committee.

- Committee member questions and discussion:
  - o HB168 has a number of different components. A member shared that trying to connect the dots and understand how the proposed budgets relate to one another, for example across community resilience and forest health, and how they meet the requirements of the legislation. Determining if the minimum thresholds are met based on the legislation is difficult without seeing the contributions across all Divisions. The budget presented today is specific to the Forest Resilience Division and includes approximately \$26M of the \$125M budget, but it is not wholly "forest health" and other Divisions within the agency also contribute to this outcome area. Cumulatively, DNR's carry forward request is meeting or exceeding the minimum requirements, so collectively at least 25% will be invested in forest health. Staff recommendations may differ from what stakeholder groups may have in mind and the joint work group will be getting into the weeds to discuss the recommendations further.

- A member asked if a presentation of the “big picture” could be shared with the committee to understand how the requests across Divisions connect. A number of HB168 investments were intended to be one-time purchases, such as for suppression equipment. The deliverables associated with the FRD budget shows a maintenance of funding levels, but a slight decrease in associated deliverables what will be accomplished in the current biennium. That might be a challenging message to share with the public and the legislature.
- The tasking memo aims to establish a joint work group with WFAC to continue the conversation about the budget. The work group will review the current proposed budgets and provide recommendations about how to make final allocations that will be sent to the Commissioner for consideration. The joint work group anticipates meeting every other week. There will be program presentations from DNR staff and ample time for questions and discussion. The final fiscal recommendations will be due in March 2023. The full FHAC will be asked to review those recommendations and provide an endorsement of the work group’s findings.

DNR is seeking volunteers to participate in the work group. A follow up email will be sent out asking for you and your organization to participate. Tentatively, volunteers include Travis Dutton, Matt Comisky, Mike Kuttel Jr., Elaine Oneil, and Tiana Luke. Tara Rentz and Loren Torgerson will be co-facilitating the work group.

### **DNR Policy Priorities by Csenka Favorini-Csorba**

#### **Keep Washington Evergreen**

- Launched last year, this initiative focuses on restoring, reforesting, and conserving forestlands. The initiative and associated legislation was updated to focus on reforestation science and nursery capacity, equity in urban tree canopy cover, revitalize trust land transfer program, and the natural areas program.
- The reforestation component includes a strategic planning process, mapping and prioritization, new seed processing plant, and nursery capacity expansion. This would improve the existing Webster Nursery and expand new capacity.
- Urban and Community Forestry would focus on grants for community projects, youth corps crews, tree equity mapping, and staff capacity to implement and administer these programs.
- Trust Land Transfer revitalization focuses on transferring underperforming lands to purchase productive replacement lands. This promotes conservation outcomes and increases outcomes of the trust. The proposal includes general funding and capital funding as well as proposed statutory changes to promote the long-term success of the program.
- The Natural Areas Program is included in the request for mapping and modeling forests at risk of conversion, strategic planning focused on management, and staff capacity.

#### **Watershed Resilience Action Plan**

- This budget request includes kelp and eelgrass monitoring, large woody debris program, aquatic restoration grants, fish passage barrier inventory, and expanded outreach and engagement.
- The request supports implementation of numerous outcomes identified in the action plan that support aquatic restoration and the health of watersheds and near-shore ecosystems. Anticipated partners include Tribes, community groups, counties, state and federal agencies, among others.
- The request also includes expanding lessons learned from the action plan process and Snohomish watershed to additional watersheds in the future.

The meeting ended at 12:00 PM.