



HILARY S. FRANZ
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS

HB 1168 | \$23.41M GF-S

Continuing Forest Health and Wildfire Investments

In 2021, the Legislature passed HB 1168 with the intent "to provide \$125 million per biennium over the next four biennia, for a total of \$500 million."

It appropriated \$125 million for the 2021-23 biennium, but only \$89.8 million for the 2023-25 biennium.

DNR and our community partners need the legislature to full-fund this commitment so we can continue to reduce the risk of wildfire across the state.

CONTACT

Brian Considine

Legislative Director
Cell: 360-764-0013
brian.considine@dnr.wa.gov

Olgy Diaz

Deputy Legislative Director
Cell: 360-918-3555
olgy.diaz@dnr.wa.gov

Wildfire and Forest Health Resilience

WORKING AT THE PACE OF WILDFIRE

The passage of House Bill 1168 in 2021 provided critical forest health and wildfire resilience resources, for DNR's All Lands, All Hands approach. The 2023 wildfire season saw:

- 1,880 ignitions – the second-most in recorded Washington history;
- Only 165,365 acres burned, about 35 percent of the 10-year average; and
- 95 percent of our fires were kept to under 10 acres.

Thanks to HB 1168 funding in the '21-'23 biennium, we had new investments on the ground in time for the 2023 wildfire season, including hiring an additional 100 firefighters, additional wildfire air resources, growth of DNR's Wildfire Ready Neighbors Program, forest health treatments, prescribed burns, and purchase of 20 pieces of heavy equipment to support our wildfire ground crews.



Even amongst the devastation wrought by the Gray and Oregon Road fires in Spokane County, we saw homes and likely lives saved thanks to proactive forest restoration and service forestry programs funded by HB 1168.

Additionally, HB 1168 funding catalyzed implementation of our 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan funding 66,373 acres treated in '21-'23. We are now halfway to the goal of 1.25 million acres treated by 2037. DNR and our partners have reported treatments completed on more than 606,000 acres of state, federal, private, and tribal lands including:

- 317,945 acres of U.S. Forest Service lands
- 143,382 acres of DNR State Trust lands
- 41,422 acres of Colville Confederated Tribal lands
- 31,112 acres of land treated through the DNR Service Forestry Program
- 24,054 acres of delivered by Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington State Parks, and Washington Conservation Commission

DNR has also been able to resume prescribed burns on state trust lands for the first time in over a decade. [Research](#) and real-world examples such as the [Schneider Springs Fire](#) highlight the compounding benefits of pairing mechanical restoration with prescribed fire to increase forest health and resilience.



DNR and WDFW staff collaborated on a cross-boundary prescribed burn near Naches. (DNR File Photo)



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NEED CONTNUED FUNDING FOR WILDFIRE RESPONSE, FOREST RESTORATION, AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

DNR only received \$89.8 million of the \$125 million commitment made by the Legislature in 2023. It still needs \$23.41 million for this biennium. This funding shortfall puts our historic forest health and wildfire investments at risk. DNR needs full-funding to ensure the agency can continue with critical treatment contracts and cost share agreements, funding to fire districts, and will prevent harmful layoffs and freezing the recruitment of positions essential to delivery of the Legislature's goals established in HB 1168.

With full funding, DNR can continue delivering:

- Forest health treatments on state, federal, tribal, and private forestlands
- 10,000 acres planned, implemented, or monitored by forest collaboratives
- 2,000 landowners assisted by Service Forestry staff
- 1,000 acres of prescribed fire to reduce fuels and enhance wildlife habitat
- 12 surplus fire engines to fire districts each year
- An additional \$5.5M in fire district grants for PPE, training, equipment, facility/station improvements and communications

Failure to receive the additional \$23.41M will result in over 3,000 acres in reduced treatments, suspension of surplus engines to fire districts and \$5.5 million in fire district grants. The immediate impact will put our forests and communities at unnecessary wildfire risk, while creating uncertainty about the long-term sustainability and delivery of programs established and expanded by HB 1168 last biennium.

Lastly, DNR's community partners will suffer most as underserved fire districts and local fire departments, partner organizations, and smaller communities will not receive the contracts and financial and technical assistance they need, including Operational Grants to Fire Districts Program, Fire District Assistance Surplus Engine Program, All-Lands Direct Investments, Service Forestry Financial Assistance Program and Wildfire Ready Neighbors.



DNR presented these surplus engines to Pend Orielle County Fire District 5, Spokane County Fire District 2, Stevens County Fire District 5, and Stevens County Fire District 10 in April 2022. (DNR File Photo)