

**STATE OF MONTANA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
EXECUTIVE ORDER No. 7-2019**

**EXECUTIVE ORDER CREATING THE
GOVERNOR'S MONTANA FOREST ACTION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

WHEREAS, Montana has over 23 million acres of forested land occurring throughout most portions of the state, both within and outside of our communities, which are critical to maintaining excellent air quality, drinking water supply and other beneficial water uses, important wildlife and fisheries habitat for a diverse range of species, soil health and conservation, outstanding recreational opportunities, and a wide array of wood products and services vital to a strong forest products economy;

WHEREAS, Montana's forests are culturally, biologically, and economically significant to Tribal Nations throughout the state;

WHEREAS, Montana's forests represent an important component to statewide and local tourism, recreation, and forest products economies;

WHEREAS, Montana's forested landscapes and waters play a central role in the quality of life, health, and well-being of Montanans;

WHEREAS, for several generations, Montanans have witnessed forest health and wildland fire risk conditions change in unprecedented ways;

WHEREAS, over 85 percent of Montana's forests are now outside of their historic vegetative condition and are at elevated risk of uncharacteristic wildfire;

WHEREAS, Montana's fire seasons are becoming longer and more severe, with the average fire season 40 days longer than it was 30 years ago and where the average number of acres burned has increased 15-fold in the last 20 years;

WHEREAS, over the past 10 years, nearly half of Montana's forests have been impacted by insect and disease outbreaks;

WHEREAS, according to the 2017 Montana Climate Assessment, with current climate change trends, the size and frequency of fire as well as bark beetle survival will likely increase, and the amount of carbon stored in Montana's forests will decrease;

WHEREAS, current conditions and anticipated trends are not only creating challenges for reducing wildfire risk, but also for supporting the forest products industry, the recreation and tourism industry, wildlife conservation, old growth retention, and watershed health;

WHEREAS, in the last 25 years, the number of western Montana homes in areas with high wildfire hazard has doubled, outpacing development rates in areas with low wildfire hazard;

WHEREAS, as urban development expands, the risk to forest ecosystems and public safety within communities and surrounding areas becomes increasingly important;

WHEREAS, the State of Montana, land managers, and the public recognize the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy as a widely accepted national strategy to engage all levels of governmental (tribal, federal, state, and local) and non-governmental organizations and the public to seek an all-lands solution to wildland fire management issues by focusing on three key areas: effective wildfire response, fire adapted communities, and resilient landscapes;

WHEREAS, Montana's urban and community forests provide over \$17 million per year in environmental, economic, and health benefits, and retain over \$185 million of replacement value and face significant risks from invasive pests like Emerald Ash Borer as well as complications with aging tree populations;

WHEREAS, forest health and wildland fire risk issues do not recognize ownership boundaries, and land managers increasingly see the need to work together to address those issues at larger landscape scales; and

WHEREAS, the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act requires each state to complete an assessment and resource strategy that address long-term efforts to conserve working forest lands, protect forests from harm, and enhance public benefits from trees and forests.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, STEVE BULLOCK, Governor of the State of Montana, pursuant to the authority vested in me under the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, Title 2, Chapter 15, MCA, and other applicable statutes, do hereby create the Montana Forest Action Advisory Council (Council) as provided in this Order.

PURPOSE

The Council is chartered to develop and implement the Montana Forest Action Plan, which will include the assessment of statewide forest conditions and the statewide forest resource strategy. This will be accomplished through collaborative, science-focused, cross-boundary and shared landscape-scale goals and management strategies to benefit the social, cultural, economic and biophysical forested landscapes of Montana. The Council will work to align national, state, tribal, private and local efforts toward achieving the vision laid out in Forests in Focus 2.0: A Cross-Boundary Collaborative Approach.

DUTIES

1. Build and communicate understanding across various interests to benefit Montana's forested lands and communities.
2. Identify key values and criteria to guide data acquisition and analysis.
3. Examine current conditions and trends affecting all forested lands in Montana using a data-derived and scientifically rigorous process to inform the development of the Montana Forest Action Plan goals and strategies.
4. Drawing from the assessment of forest conditions and trends and the expertise and experience of past collaborative efforts, identify priority areas in need of active forest restoration with a particular focus on forest health and fire adaptation, community protection, industry retention and economic development, recreation and tourism, wildlife and aquatic habitat, watershed restoration and other areas as identified by the Council.
5. Assist in identifying priority landscapes for forest restoration and management action that lead to successful, coordinated projects that are shared across jurisdictions and constituencies.
6. Prioritize and amplify collaborative efforts that bring together stakeholders representing diverse perspectives.
7. Review and recommend existing programs, tools, and authorities that could be incorporated into a long-term forest strategy.
8. Ensure the Montana Forest Action Plan includes a systematic process of evaluation, planning, action, and monitoring to measure and communicate success.
9. Ensure the Montana Forest Action Plan does not counter or conflict with existing land management plans.
10. Engage and communicate with colleagues, partners, networks, and the public as ambassadors for the Council process.
11. Institutionalize a process for annual accountability, further public engagement, and adaptive management.
12. Identify one or more examples of projects that exemplify cross-boundary forest restoration where multiple stakeholders are engaged.
13. Establish realistic, achievable and measurable outcomes.
14. Identify recommendations for effective plan implementation.

COMPOSITION

1. The Council shall be comprised of no more than 30 members appointed by, and serving at the pleasure of, the Governor.
2. Members of the Council will represent a diversity of expertise, interests, and perspectives. This will include federal, state, local and tribal governments; conservation organizations; forest products industry; collaborative and watershed groups; conservation districts; private landowners; recreation and tourism members; and other relevant partners.

PROCESS

1. The Council shall be supported by and coordinate with state and federal agencies serving in an ex-officio capacity that will share input and perspectives critical to the Council's recommendations and their effective implementation.
2. A Leadership Committee, selected by the Governor and comprised of members of the Council, shall manage the course of operations for the Council, decide on priorities and order of business over the year-long planning process, and deliberate on issues assigned to them by the larger body of the Council.
3. The Council will meet, at a minimum, six times in varying locations across the state, unless otherwise determined by the Leadership Committee. The Leadership Committee will meet on a monthly basis.
4. The Council will hold public meetings and identify public comment periods to support deliberations and facilitate public input and ideas. The Council shall welcome input from all relevant partners and operate in a transparent and collaborative manner.
5. The Council shall draw upon the knowledge of social, economic, and biophysical experts and cultural leaders to develop a deeper understanding of key challenges and opportunities and further support the Council's deliberations.
6. The Council may identify and convene workgroups to focus on and deliberate key issues relevant to the Montana Forest Action Plan.

ADMINISTRATIVE

1. The Council is administratively attached to the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). The DNRC will serve as the principal convener of key stakeholders and tribal governments to develop a statewide assessment of forest conditions and a collaborative statewide resource strategy to address wildland fire risk and forest health issues across ownership boundaries on forests throughout the state.
2. The DNRC and hired contractors shall ensure the Council has the day-to-day support needed to advance its activities. This will include preparing for Council meetings, ensuring adequate public engagement and participation, conducting or overseeing any required research, managing work groups, and overseeing the production of a draft and final plan for the Council to review, assess, revise and adopt.

DELIVERABLES

The Council shall deliver the Montana Forest Action Plan directly to the DNRC. These materials shall be made publicly available.

- 1. Review Examples of Cross-boundary Forest Restoration and Management
Due: September 2019
- 2. Draft Statewide Assessment of Forest Conditions
Due: January 2020
- 3. Work Group Reports as directed by the Council
Due: March 2020
- 4. Draft Montana Forest Action Plan
Due: May 2020
- 5. Final Montana Forest Action Plan
Due: September 2020

COMPENSATION

The Council members will be eligible for reasonable travel reimbursement per § 2-15-122, MCA.

DURATION

The Council shall complete its work and cease to exist by September 15, 2020, unless rescinded or renewed by subsequent executive order.

This Order is effective immediately.



GIVEN under my hand and the GREAT SEAL of the State of Montana this 20 day of MAY 2019.

[Handwritten signature]

STEVE BULLOCK, Governor

ATTEST:

Cory Stapleton, by [Handwritten Signature]
COREY STAPLETON, Secretary of State *deputy*