



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources
Doug Sutherland - Commissioner of Public Lands

DNR Resource Protection Program 2007 Summary



Considering the nickname of “the Evergreen State,” it is no surprise that trees and forests are valued in Washington.

The Resource Protection Division of the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) houses several programs delivered through DNR’s regional organization that work together to enhance the health of Washington Forests:

- **Forest Health** provides education and technical assistance on forest insects and diseases.
- **Wildfire Prevention** delivers public education on the role of individuals/organizations and provides local fire district assistance.
- **Urban and Community Forestry** delivers technical and financial assistance to communities, both urban and rural, to keep urban forests productive and to help the public understand the connections between trees, forests and daily lives.
- **Wildfire Preparedness** provides training and other pre-suppression efforts to ensure safe and cost effective suppression actions.
- **Wildfire Suppression** delivers the actual suppression of wildfire on 12.7 million acres of state, private and tribal lands.

Each of these programs fills a separate role, but their work is connected, because fire and forest health are connected.

The 2007 accomplishments of these programs reflect that connection and the changing conditions that affect forest health and fire in Washington State.

Protecting forest health includes reducing risk and responding to threats of many kinds and in many ways. Photos, top to bottom:

- Bears stripping bark from young trees can kill whole plantations. Bear damage and root disease have killed trees on 233,000 acres, mostly in Western Washington.
- Western spruce budworm has increased dramatically along the eastern slope of the Cascade Range (note the rusty areas).
- Workshops can give landowners and community members information along with hands-on experience.
- Wildfire is a fact of life of Washington. Projects to increase prevention and firefighting capability, reduce hazardous fuels and restore fire-adapted ecosystems help reduce risks of catastrophic fire.

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2007 Program Accomplishments

Forest Health

- Identified about 1.4 million acres of forestland with elevated levels of tree mortality, defoliation or foliar disease.
- Program staff provided technical assistance or education to approximately 3,100 forest landowners.
- \$123,000 was granted to landowners for Western Bark Beetle Prevention & Restoration work.
- The Legislature passed SB6141, defining a new Forest Health program structure and increasing the program's budget to enhance capacity for technical assistance to landowners, influence increased forest health improvements on federal land, and develop a forest health pilot demonstration area in eastern Washington.

Wildfire Prevention

- Implemented a comprehensive fire prevention campaign, including a four part television series aired on NWCN.
- Deployed four Fire Prevention Teams during high fire danger.
- Awarded nearly \$500,000 in grants to 107 rural fire districts to refurbish 21 wildland fire engines, purchase equipment and train volunteer firefighters.
- Collaborated with communities and fire districts to develop four Community Wildfire Protection Plans, bring 131 of the 208 identified communities at risk under a plan.
- Completed 1,800 acres of priority fuel reduction projects identified in Community Wildfire Protection Plans.
- Secured \$1.8 million in grants for future cost-share fuel reduction programs.

Urban and Community Forestry

- Provided technical assistance to 150 cities and towns as part of the Urban and Community Forestry Program.
- Added five new municipalities to the Tree City USA program.
- Added five new communities to the Firewise Communities USA program.

Wildfire Preparedness

- Increased rapid initial attack capabilities to reduce large costly fires and kept 96 percent of wildfires on DNR protected lands to less than ten acres.
- Reduced suppression costs on all large fires by the use of contractors and inter-agency resources.
- Trained over 910 DNR employees and 220 local agency employees on basic and advanced wildfire presuppression and suppression activities.
- Trained and supervised 1,185 inmates to staff ten-person fire crews and DNR's mobile kitchens.

Wildfire Suppression

- There were no serious firefighter injuries or fatalities.
- Responded to 1,523 reports of wildfire, of which, 980 required suppression action. About 23,835 acres of land protected by DNR burned; this is less than 1.0 percent of DNR-protected acres.
- Integrated cost-containment strategies on all fires, particularly on the 12 largest fires. DNR estimated expenditures are \$22 million.

Summary of Key Goals

- *Avoid threats to human life, public safety and resources.*
- *Work with planning and educational efforts to promote forest health, fire-safe neighborhoods and protection of the working forest.*
- *Support forest management actions that appropriately reduce fuel loading and/or restore or mimic natural disturbances.*
- *Avoid expensive restoration treatments on sites degraded by intense fires; and*
- *Reduce cost of large fires.*

Among the forty one wildfires that grew beyond 10 acres, 12 grew larger than 100 acres, required elite incident management teams, and commitment of large quantities of fire suppression resources. These 12 fires burned 171,700 acres of federal, state and local jurisdictions at a cost to all agencies of about \$34 million.

2007 – Large Wildland Fires in Washington

Acreage and costs include DNR and other state, federal and local jurisdictions.

Start Date	Fire Name	County	Acres	Est. Total Cost \$ in millions
7/7/07	Little Chopaka	Okanogan	4,428	\$1,718,200
7/8/07	Easy Street	Chelan	5,200	\$1,991,200
7/13/07	Horse Heaven Hills	Benton	28,575	\$1,708,500
7/15/07	Tunk Grade	Okanogan	16,498	\$2,851,800
7/15/07	Windy Ridge	Stevens	218	\$4,138,600
8/2/07	Crow Creek	Yakima	117	\$936,500
8/2/07	Easton Ridge	Kittitas	350	\$2,220,100
8/6/07	Domke Lake	Chelan	11,900	\$9,874,500
8/16/07	Wautoma	Benton	67,000	\$404,300
8/30/07	South Omak Lake	Okanogan	10,500	\$1,203,500
9/10/07	Manila Creek	Ferry	26,805	\$6,401,200
9/20/07	Broughton	Skamania	130	\$890,500

Challenges for the Future

- Extreme fire behavior associated with forest health and climate change increases costs and risk to the public and to firefighters.
- Create an understanding of how investments in forest health can reduce suppression and other costs for both the public and landowners.
- Achieve funding for the 10 recommendations in the Forest Health Work Group 2004 report.
- Reduce risks to personal and community safety due to 600,000 new homes in Washington over the next 15 years.
- Stabilize federal funding for landowner assistance and other programs.
- Changing federal performance and safety standards that will further compress the very limited number of people qualified to participate in incident management teams.
- Defining the “best mix” of contracted, state, federal or other resources necessary for effective and efficient wildfire suppression.

Converging Forces

Washington’s residents value its 22 million acres of forests in many ways—as a source of wood, jobs and income; as habitat and aids to clean air and water; as places to live and recreate; and as sources of beauty and inspiration.

Forest-related issues are emerging as human factors meet natural forces affecting the state’s forests—changing weather patterns, a growing population with urban values, and expansion of development into the forest zone. These converging forces affect fire risk, fire suppression strategies, and forest health.

Forest health and fires are closely connected, and a forest’s ability to withstand stresses such as drought, fire, insects and diseases is directly affected by complex interactions of many factors.

Wildfire is part of Washington’s cultural and natural history, but risks to landowners, communities and firefighters have increased and are expected to continue that trend.

Planning for Change

There are economic, ecological and social risks associated with wildfire. There are also broad public policy questions about the costs and effectiveness of the current wildfire suppression efforts.

In 2005, to answer these and other policy questions, Commissioner of Public Lands Doug Sutherland directed the DNR Resource Protection Division to develop a Strategic Plan for the DNR Fire Program.

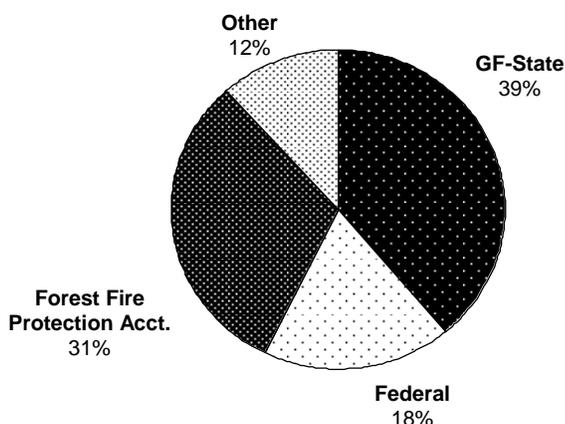
DNR is working on creating specific tasks to implement the 2020 Strategic Plan.

Resource Protection Funding

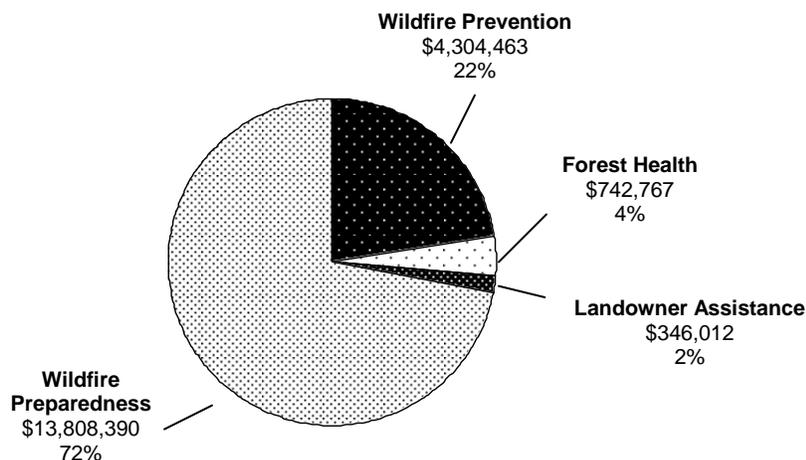
There are four major funding sources for the DNR Resource Protection Programs, excluding the Wildfire Suppression program. See the first pie chart, below.

In Fiscal Year 2007 federal funding decreased by \$500,000. Long-term reliance on federal funding is of concern, because federal funding is likely to decline due to changing federal budget priorities, and most of the increase was in grants to direct on-the-ground activities; core program elements were largely reduced.

FY 2007 Resource Protection Program Expenditures by Fund
Without Wildfire Suppression



FY 2007 Distribution of Expenditures by Program
Without Wildfire Suppression



- **More Information about the Resource Protection Program:**

http://www.dnr.wa.gov/RecreationEducation/Topics/FireInformation/Pages/rp_fire_fireinformation.aspx

- **Fire Suppression Study, Report 05-11, Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee:**
www1.leg.wa.gov/reports/05-11.pdf

Accountability

Financial decisions are based on actions that result in the lowest net costs to the taxpayers and the landowners:

- **Applying lowest net cost approaches** that achieve all policy objectives;
- **Working collaboratively** to reduce fuel loading through economically viable utilization of forest materials.
- **Optimizing allocation of available funding** through inter-governmental, landowner and community coordination;
- **Investigating all fires and pursue cost recovery** for all negligent fires;
- **Incorporating a cost containment culture** in decision making on large fires; and
- **Reducing suppression costs and resource loss** by making wise spending decisions.