

RCW 76.04.511 Wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account. (1) The wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account is created in the state treasury. All receipts from moneys directed to the account must be deposited in the account. Moneys in the account may be spent only after appropriation. Expenditures from the account may be used only for carrying out the purposes of chapter 298, Laws of 2021 and for no other purposes.

(2) Expenditures from the account may be made to state agencies, federally recognized tribes, local governments, fire and conservation districts, nonprofit organizations, forest collaboratives, and small forestland owners, consistent with the 20-year forest health strategic plan, the wildland fire protection 10-year strategic plan, and the Washington state forest action plan.

(3) The wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account may only be used to monitor, track, and implement the following purposes:

(a) Fire preparedness activities consistent with the goals contained in the state's wildland fire protection 10-year strategic plan including, but not limited to, funding for firefighting capacity and investments in ground and aerial firefighting resources, equipment, and technology, and the development and implementation of a wildland fire aviation support plan in order to expand and improve the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the department's wildland fire aviation program;

(b) Fire prevention activities to restore and improve forest health and reduce vulnerability to drought, insect infestation, disease, and other threats to healthy forests including, but not limited to, silvicultural treatments, seedling development, thinning and prescribed fire, and postfire recovery activities to stabilize and prevent unacceptable degradation to natural and cultural resources and minimize threats to life and property resulting from the effects of a wildfire. Funding priority under this subsection must be given to programs, activities, or projects aligned with the 20-year forest health strategic plan, the wildland fire protection 10-year strategic plan, and the Washington state forest action plan across any combination of local, state, federal, tribal, and private ownerships;

(c) Fire protection activities for homes, properties, communities, and values at risk including, but not limited to: Potential control lines or strategic fuel breaks in forests and rangelands near communities; improved warning and communications systems to prepare for wildfires; increased engagement with non-English speaking communities in their home language for community preparedness; and the national fire protection association's fire wise USA and the fire-adapted communities network programs to help communities take action before wildfires.

(4) Appropriations for forest health activities funded by the wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account shall not be less than 25 percent of the biennial appropriated funding.

(5) Appropriations for community resilience activities funded by the wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account shall not be less than 15 percent of the biennial appropriated funding.

(6) Funding may not be used for emergency fire costs or suppression costs as defined in RCW 76.04.005.

(7) To the maximum extent possible, workforce development investments from the wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account should prioritize historically marginalized, underrepresented, rural, and low-income communities.

(8) Any expenditures from the wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account for forest health treatments on federal lands must be additive to the baseline accomplishments and outputs already funded through the federal government and outlined in the annual work plans of the United States forest service, bureau of land management, the national park service, and/or the United States fish and wildlife service.

(9) 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 under this section. In assessing investments and developing recommendations for communities that will be impacted based on ecological, public infrastructure, and life safety needs as set forth in the 20-year forest health strategic plan and the wildland fire protection 10-year strategic plan, the forest health advisory committee and wildland fire advisory committee must use environmental justice or equity focused tools, such as the Washington tracking network's environmental health disparities tool to identify highly impacted communities. This identification must be used as a factor in determining recommendations for investments under this section. "Highly impacted communities" has the same meaning as defined in RCW 19.405.020.

(10) To the maximum extent practicable and where consistent with the 20-year forest health strategic plan, the wildland fire protection 10-year strategic plan, or the Washington state forest action plan and landowner objectives, forest health treatments funded through the wildfire response, forest restoration, and community resilience account shall seek to utilize the value of any merchantable materials to help offset treatment costs. [2021 c 298 § 2.]

Short title—2021 c 298: See note following RCW 76.04.505.