

**RCW 76.06.170 Forest health technical advisory committee. (1)**

The commissioner of public lands may appoint a forest health technical advisory committee when the commissioner determines that forestlands in any area of the state appear to be threatened by a forest health condition of such a nature, extent, or timing that action to reduce the threat may be necessary.

(a) The committee shall consist of one scientist chosen for expertise in forest ecology, one scientist chosen for expertise in aquatic ecology, one scientist chosen for expertise in wildlife biology, two scientists chosen for expertise relative to the attendant risk, one specialist in wildfire protection, one specialist in fuels management, one forester with extensive silvicultural experience in the affected forest type, and a chairperson who shall represent the commissioner. The departments of fish and wildlife, ecology, and natural resources shall provide technical assistance to the committee in the areas of fish and wildlife, water quality, and forest practices, but shall not be members of the committee. The director of forest health protection of region 6 of the United States department of agriculture forest service or their named designee shall be invited to be an ex officio member of the committee. In the event the area affected contains substantial acreage of tribal or federally owned lands, representatives of the affected agencies and tribes shall be invited to participate in the proceedings of the committee.

(b) The commissioner may disband the committee when he or she deems appropriate.

(2) The committee shall evaluate the threat to forest health and make a timely report to the commissioner on its nature, extent, and location.

(a) In its deliberations, the committee shall consider the need for action to reduce the threat and alternative methods of achieving the desired results, including the environmental risks associated with the alternatives and the risks associated with taking no action.

(b) The committee shall also recommend potential approaches to achieve the desired results for forestland ownerships of fewer than ten acres and for forests owned for scientific, study, recreational, or other uses not compatible with active management.

(c) The committee shall recommend to the commissioner whether a forest health hazard warning or forest health hazard order is warranted based on the factors in RCW 76.06.180(2) or when otherwise determined by the committee to be warranted.

(d) When the commissioner issues a forest health hazard warning or forest health hazard order, the committee shall monitor the progress and results of activities to address the hazard, and periodically report its findings to the commissioner.

(3) The exercise by forest health technical advisory committee members of their authority under this section shall not imply or create any liability on their part. Advisory committee members shall be compensated as provided in RCW 43.03.250 and shall receive reimbursement for travel expenses as provided by RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060. Costs associated with the committee may be paid from the general fund appropriation made available to the department of natural resources for fire suppression. [2007 c 480 s 6.]