



ELECTRIC UTILITY WILDLAND FIRE PREVENTION - TASK FORCE

PRELIMINARY REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

DECEMBER 2019

As required by Substitute Senate Bill 5305, passed by the 2019 Legislature, please accept this preliminary report of the Electric Utility Wildland Fire Prevention Task Force (Task Force).

The tasks assigned to the Task Force by the legislature are to advise the department on the following issues:

- a) Developing, for consideration by the department and individual electric utilities, a model agreement for managing danger trees and other vegetation that pose a risk of wildland fire and associated utility liability due to the proximity to electrical transmission wires and other utility equipment;
- b) Assist the department with the distribution of the model danger tree management agreement developed in (a) to utilities for their consideration for execution with the department;
- c) Developing communication protocols and educational exchanges between the department and electric utilities for identifying and addressing issues relating to utility infrastructure to reduce the risks of wildland fires;
- d) Developing protocols, including thresholds, for implementing the relevant provisions of RCW 76.04.015 when the department's investigation involves electric utility infrastructure or potential electric utility liability;
- e) Creating rosters of certified wildland fire investigation firms or persons and third-party qualified utility operations personnel who may be called upon by the parties as appropriate; and
- f) Other issues brought forward by Task Force members.

Consistent with the requirements of the bill, Hilary Franz, Commissioner of Public Lands appointed George Geissler as Chair of the Electric Utility Wildland Fire Prevention Task Force on August 7, 2019. Commissioner Franz also appointed the following members prior to the first meeting of the Task Force on September 4, 2019:

Task Force Member	Representing
Ben Rushwald	Puget Sound Energy
Darren Larsen	City of Ellensburg
Dave James	Avista Utilities
David Gottula	Okanogan County Electric Cooperative
David Lucas	Pacific Corporation
Diane Myers	Weyerhaeuser

Erik Wahlquist
Garry Rosman
Gary Margheim
George Geissler (Task Force Chair)
George Yates
Jim Smith
Ronda Strauch
Mendy Droke – Alternate
Paul Meyer – Alternate

Chelan County PUD, District No. 1
Inland Power and Light
Washington Department of Natural Resources
Washington Department of Natural Resources
Norseman Timber Company
Klickitat County PUD
Seattle City Light
Seattle City Light
City of Ellensburg

The Task Force first convened on September 4, 2019 in Olympia, WA. All members were present. The meeting agenda and meeting notes are attached as part of this report.

Meeting Highlights:

- Commissioner Franz welcomed members of the Task Force.
- There were initial discussions of the scope and purpose of the Task Force and what information the Task force may need to carry out the task assigned.
- Because of a malfunction with recording equipment, meeting notes are limited.
- No tasks were completed at this meeting.

The Task Force convened on November 15, 2019 in Olympia, WA. All members were present. The meeting agenda and notes are included as part of this report.

Meeting Objective: Come to a common understanding of the Task Force’s scope of work and DNR’s fire investigation process

Agenda Topics:

1. Review/discuss themes from facilitator interviews; Task Force Charter; initial Work Plan
2. Further scope identified tasks (to help inform work plan going forward/provide numerical task IDs)
3. Open public meetings training
4. Presentation and discussion regarding DNR wildland fire investigation process
5. Discuss components of a model agreement for managing Danger Trees and other vegetation
6. Presentation and discussion of DNR’s MOA for managing rights of way with BPA

Meeting Highlights:

- The Department has contracted with an outside facilitator to assist the Task Force Chair with facilitating this and future meetings, and to assist the Chair with the development of an ongoing work plan for the Task Force, and development of meeting agendas.
- Presentations were provided to the Task Force on the Department’s statutory responsibilities for forest fire origin and cause investigations and an overview of an agreement between the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the Department’s State Uplands program regarding BPA’s management of rights-of-ways, including hazard tree removal.
- An overview of a draft work plan was provided to the Task Force for review and comment.
- No specific tasks were completed at this meeting.

The Task Force will convene next on February 12, 2020. The site is to be determined.

Draft Meeting Objective: Develop an outline for possible model danger tree agreement and discuss investigation protocols

Draft Agenda Topics:

1. Discuss next steps toward a model agreement for managing danger trees
 - a. Operations/risk mgmt. needs
 - b. Resource compensation needs
 - c. Communication process between parties
2. Discuss additional interests for investigation protocols
3. Review/update Task Force work plan

Included with this report is the, “Draft Electric Utility Wildland Fire Prevention Task Force Work Plan.” The work plan outlines the various elements necessary for the Task Force to complete the task assigned to by December 1, 2020. The work plan is dynamic and will be updated as progress is completed.