

# Briefing to the House Innovation, Community and Economic Development, and Veterans Committee

January 12, 2024

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# ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES



- **Direct charge of and supervision of all matters pertaining to forest fire service of the state.**
- **State signatory to Federal Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Management and Stafford Act Response Agreement**
  - Administers National Interagency Resource Ordering System (IROC)
  - State Foresters are primary link nationally to National Interagency Fire Center (NMAC, NWCG, etc.) and establish Federal Interagency Guidelines and Policies.
- **Maintains and administers Northwest Forest Fire Compact and State-to-State Response Agreements (CA, FL, NC, GA, etc.)**
- **Provides direct response and mutual aid at the local, state, regional, national levels.**
  - Ground resources – Engines, Hand Crews, Heavy Equipment, DOC
  - Aviation resources – Rotor, Fixed-Wing, Air Attack, Multi-Mission
  - Logistics – Cache, Kitchens, Communications, IMT support, etc.
  - Type 1 and 2 (CIMT) Incident Management Team support
  - Contract resources – Private Contractors
- **Community Preparedness and Resilience Assistance**
- **Forest Health and Resilience**

## 2023 Fire Year



- **Early season.** Driven by long-term drought and Canadian wildfire response. Initial attack mostly successful.
- **May – June.** Western WA fires such as Shannon Lake (Skagit), Sutherland (Clallam) and McEwan (Mason). Significant utilization of ground and air resources. Complexity of Wildland Urban Interface.
- **August 18th.** Oregon Rd and Gray Fires (Spokane) with passage of cold front.
- **September-November.** Several wet lightening events. Initial attack mostly successful. Southeast US wildfire response (NC, KY, GA, VA) mobilizing DNR, fire service and contract resources.

**Key Statistics**

- 1900+ Ignitions
- 170,000 Acres Burned (10-year average 472,812)
- Event of Record – Grey and Oregon Road Fires (366 primary residences, two civilian fatalities)
- Of note – Greater number of fires west of Cascades than east of Cascades.

## 2023 Fire Year Takeaways



- Initial Attack Heavy Equipment (HB1168) proved very effective.
- Fire District Aviation Assistance (HB1498) allowed for fire districts direct request for aviation response.
- Detection System Pilot Project shows promise but was not fully operational in 2023. System now fully operational for 2024 fire year.
- Prepositioning of resources and use of mobile air tanker base improved response.
- Multi-Mission and UAV programs demonstrated potential and to be further integrated into interagency response.
- Existing IAA/FLRAs should be expanded to encourage fire district use of prescribed fire and response through IROC.
- Westside fires are becoming more prevalent and preparedness actions may look different

# Wildland Fire Assistance Programs



- **Local Fire Protection District Assistance and Funding**
  - PPE/Equipment Grants (State HB1168 and Federal BIL)
  - Operational Grants (State HB1168)
  - Surplus Engine Program (State HB1168)
  - Wildland Fire Training Academies and Courses (State and Federal Funding)
- **Community Resilience Assistance and Funding**
  - Wildfire Ready Neighbors (State HB1168)
  - Firewise Community Grants (State HB1168)
  - Administer Federal Community Wildfire Defense Grants (Federal BIL). For community wildfire protection plan development and implementation. Round 1 - $23 million /Round 2 – Announcement in March
- **Administer and deliver Federal Cooperative Forestry and Fire Grants** (Forest Stewardship, Forest Health, Urban and Community Forestry, State Fire Capacity, Volunteer Fire Capacity)

## 2024



- **Preparedness for 2024 fire year** began in November 2023. Contracts and agreements are being updated. Staffing for seasonal firefighter positions has already begun. Resources availability expected to be at or slightly above 2023 levels.
- **Season Ahead**
  - Transition to El Niña weather pattern began last year. Current temperature and precipitation forecasts are consistent with a mature El Niño.
  - Spring conditions are uncertain. A weak snowpack could produce an earlier start to 2024 fire activity, particularly from the Cascades westward. Above normal potential may develop earlier in the season depending on remaining winter month snowpack development and spring rainfall.
- **Major Items**
  - Transition to new national business model for incident management teams.
  - Update to all IAA/FLRA with fire districts
  - Renegotiating Federal Master Agreement
  - Smoke management (HB1578) resources for wildfires and fire use

# DNR Legislative Items of Interest



**Wildfire and Forest Health Resilience/HB 1168 Investments (GF-S $23.41M)**

Funding to meet the Legislature's $125 million biennial commitment in the passage of HB 1168 (2021). Funding will continue the forest health and wildfire resilience work that began last biennium. These critical investments were on the ground to help mitigate the damage and cost of wildfires in 2023. Failure to receive full funding will result in loss of funding for grants and funding to fire districts, forest health contractors, and communities.

**Smokey Bear License Plate**

Legislation establishing a Smokey Bear license plate. Revenue from Smokey Bear license plates would be devoted for wildfire prevention programs administered by DNR. This would be the agency's first license plate, the only state license plate for wildfire prevention, and is the symbol of support for wildland firefighters.

## Questions?


OK...WHO STARTED A WATER FIGHT
Firefighter Funnies
WITH THE FORESTRY GUYS?

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# Washington State Fire Services Resource Mobilization Plan

Innovation, Community and Economic Development, and Veterans Committee
January 2024

Presented by:
Melissa Gannie
Assistant State Fire Marshal

# What does the plan do?

- Provides statewide personnel, equipment, and other logistical resources when a wildland fire or other emergency exceeds the capacity of local jurisdictions.
- Names the Chief of the Washington State Patrol as the authority to authorize a state-declared mobilization.
- Directs the Washington State Patrol, Fire Protection Bureau, Office of the State Fire Marshal to coordinate statewide fire service resources by:
  - Providing onsite staffing and financial support at each incident that supports the local jurisdiction
  - Executing reimbursements for all fire service personnel (volunteer and career) and equipment that are mobilized under the plan

RCW 43.43.960, 43.43.961, 43.43.962, 43.43.963, 43.43.964, and 43.43.965
www.wsp.gov/all-risk-mobilization

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## How Does All-Risk Mobilization Work?

1. Incident exceeds or is anticipated to exceed local capacity or capabilities.
2. Mobilization request is submitted by the fire chief to Emergency Management Division.
3. WSP Chief approves or denies the request.
4. Resources are ordered upon approval.
5. Available resources arrive. SFMO sends field representative to assist.
6. Mobilization ends when the threat is mitigated and incident is able to return to local fire jurisdiction.
7. WSP reimburses mobilization and initial responding resources.





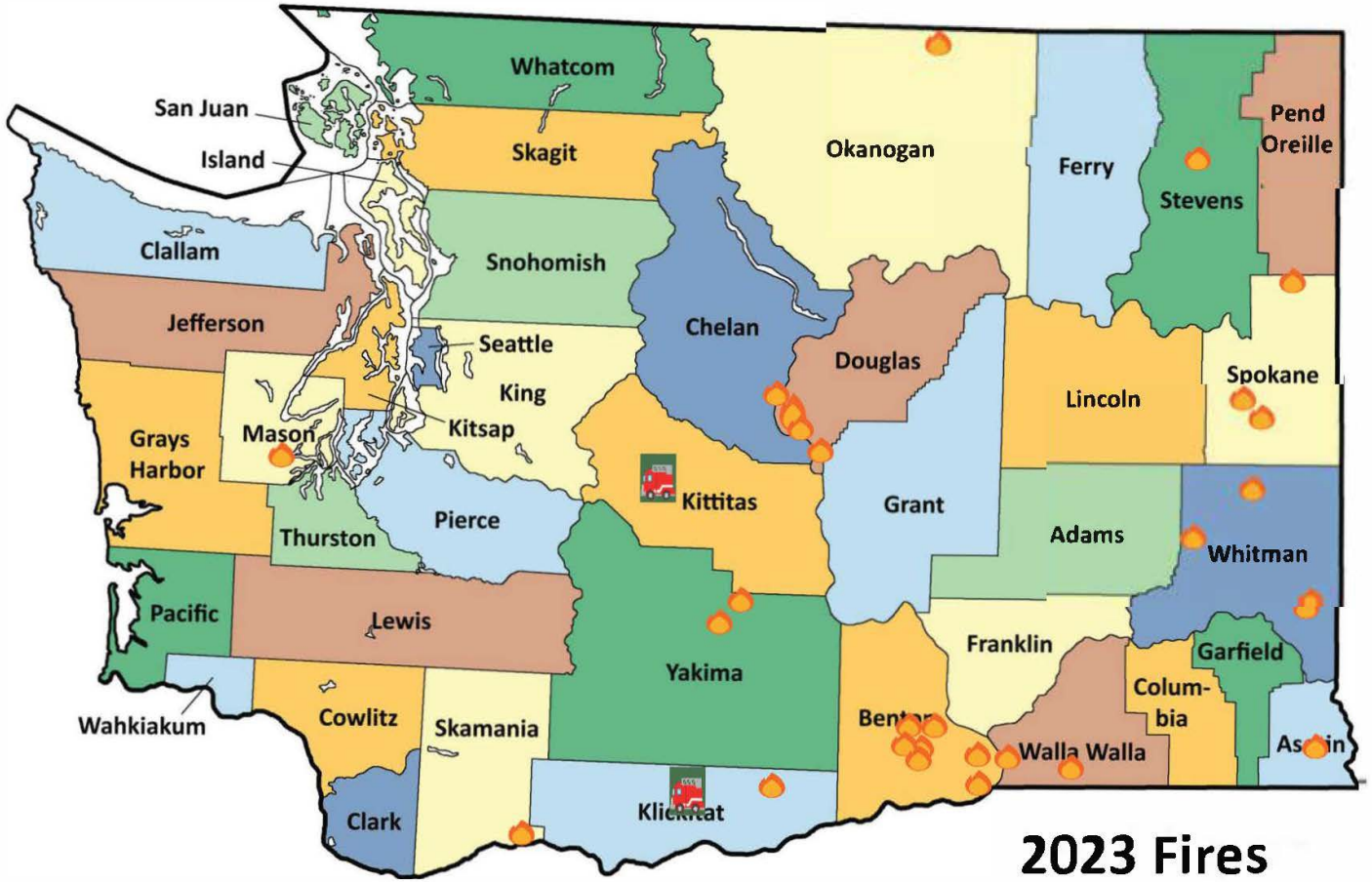




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2023 Fires

## 2023 Fire Season

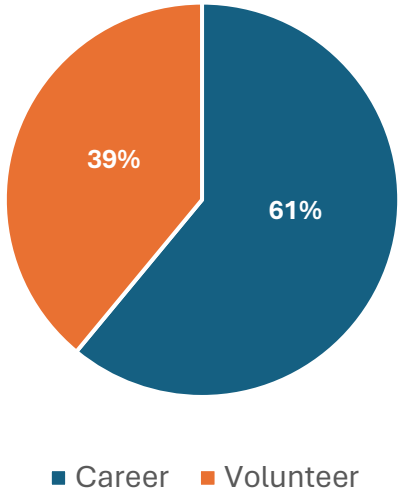
- 27 Wildfire mobilizations
- 101-day Fire Season
- 1 Pre-Positioning (Weather Event)
- $20 million estimated cost to date
- No All-Risk mobilizations in 2023

## Historical Perspective:

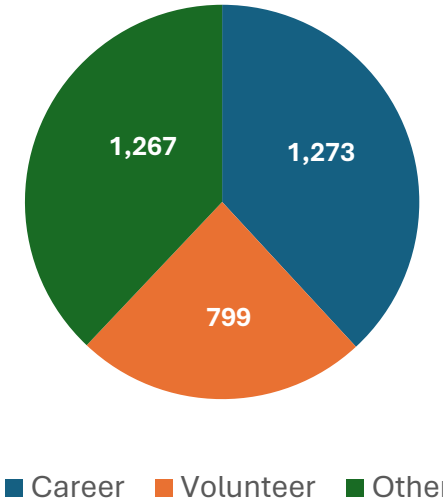
- Since 1992 there have been 346 mobilizations
- Since July 2003, approximately $201,757,335 in cost.
- Biennial appropriation is $8 million.

# 2023 Responders and Payments

## 2023 Responder Breakdown




## 2023 Total Payments



# 2023 Largest Fires

**Newell Road**
Mobe Duration- 10 days



**Gray Fire**
Mobe Duration-18 days



**Oregon Road**
Mobe Duration- 18 days



# Helping local jurisdictions

**Mobilizations:**

- Provide local jurisdictions with outside resources and funding to mitigate the incident/threat
- Assist with the return to normal operations and delivery of community services
- End when there is no longer a threat to local jurisdictions



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## Community Risk Reduction (CRR)




WA STATE CRR COALITION

KEEPING WASHINGTON FIRE SAFE

CRR Week is January 15 – 24, 2024, kicking off on Martin Luther King Day

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