

SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Item 36: Department of Forestry 2021 Fire Season

To: Ways and Means Full Committee
From: Natural Resources Subcommittee
Carrier: Senator Taylor

The Natural Resources Subcommittee recommends that the Joint Interim Committee on Ways and Means acknowledge the receipt of a report from the Department of Forestry on the 2021 wildfire season and the preliminary report of losses on private lands of timber, building, fencing, livestock, and grazing land capacity.

The report provided a thorough overview of the timeline and progress of the 2021 fire season. As has been the case in recent years, the fire season extended well past historical time frames, spanning both the 2021 and 2022 fiscal years. The report indicates that the fire season activity accelerated quickly, and the peak of the season lasted for 65 consecutive days. Statistics provided in the report indicate that this year's fire season exceed the ten-year average for the number of fires on ODF protected lands, the number of acres burned, and the number of human-caused fires.

Fire costs for the 2021 season are estimated to be \$129.17 million. After subtracting anticipated Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grants of \$25.6 million, anticipated federal agency cost reimbursements of \$33.4 million, and local district cost-shares of \$1.08 million, net emergency fire costs to the state are estimated to be \$69.09 million. It is anticipated that the agency will be requesting budget resources either during legislative days in January or during the 2022 Legislative Session.

The report also included information on the losses on private lands of timber, buildings, fencing, livestock, and of grazing land capacity where the land is expected to be unavailable for two or more growing seasons as required by House Bill 2501 from 2015. There were ten fires in 2021 that require reporting under the law. The total number of acres burned in these fires were 218,064. 478 individual structures were lost, with the value of timber and structures lost totaling \$180.27 million.

The Subcommittee recommends approval.