

Editorial Board | Making a difference in fighting fire risk

World Editorial Board

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The threat of destructive megafires is one of North Central Washington's most vexing challenges and as a region we have been stepping up and working together to mitigate those risks.

We have massive forest health problems that are a ticking time bomb in our back yard. We got a taste of what can happen in the 2014 and 2015 wildfires. The risk remains.

Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz will be in Wenatchee this week to take part in a panel discussion along with Sen. Brad Hawkins, and representatives of The Nature Conservancy, the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative and the Era of Megafires project.

The Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center will host the panel at 6:30 p.m. on Monday. This is an outstanding opportunity for community members who are interested or concerned about the wildfire threat in our region to demonstrate their interest in solving the issue.

Tremendous efforts have been already been made in our region over the past few years to mitigate the risks. Dozens of neighborhoods have implemented Firewise approaches to make their homes more fire resilient, the Era of Megafires presentation by Dr. Paul Hessburg and North 40 Productions has created awareness across the region of the severity of the forest health issues and the need to address those challenges in a comprehensive fashion.

Sen. Hawkins was successful in getting legislation passed that sets a goal of assessing and treating one million acres of forest land over a 16-year period. That will likely include mechanical thinning and prescribed fire treatments.

What's impressive is that North Central Washington is taking the lead in these efforts. We started by taking action at the local level and then inviting the state and federal governments to contribute.

This approach is far more effective than sitting back and waiting for state and federal agencies to solve the issue for us. It's going to take everyone working together. That's a powerful community model for owning our own future.

This is the opinion of The Wenatchee World and its Editorial Board: Publisher Rufus Woods, Managing Editor Cal FitzSimmons, Features Editor Marco Martinez and Editorial Page Editor Kelli Scott.