H-2402.1

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**HOUSE BILL 2110**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2022 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Walsh, McEntire, and Klippert

AN ACT Relating to fish and wildlife enforcement; amending RCW 77.04.012; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Recognizing the state's significant cultural and economic dependance on a healthy marine environment, the legislature intends to ensure adequate protection of that environment. Despite investments by the legislature to reverse the trend, there has been a noticeable erosion of the department of fish and wildlife's marine law enforcement function, including a decline of fish and wildlife officer presence on marine waters, providing adequate services and resources to the regulated community, maintaining orderly fisheries, and providing a focus on sensitive living marine resources.

The intent of the legislature is to: (1) Ensure officers retain subject matter expertise in a complex form of law enforcement; (2) enforce the law with educated and reasonable tolerances; (3) maintain orderly fisheries; (4) ensure the department provides the best services for the regulated community and public at large; and (5) ensure that the department of fish and wildlife carries out fish and wildlife protection priorities consistent with the expectations of the legislature.

**Sec.**  RCW 77.04.012 and 2000 c 107 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

Wildlife, fish, and shellfish are the property of the state. The commission, director, and the department shall preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage the wildlife and food fish, game fish, and shellfish in state waters and offshore waters.

The department shall conserve the wildlife and food fish, game fish, and shellfish resources in a manner that does not impair the resource. In a manner consistent with this goal, the department shall seek to maintain the economic well-being and stability of the fishing industry in the state. The department shall promote orderly fisheries and shall enhance and improve recreational and commercial fishing in this state.

Recognizing that enforcement of fish and wildlife laws is imperative to effective management, the department shall maintain an enforcement program with adequate commissioned law enforcement personnel, funding, and resources.

Recognizing that terrestrial and marine operating environments are distinctly different, and to ensure proper allocation of department law enforcement resources, the department shall dedicate no less than 25 percent of the total field deployed officers to marine resource and public safety protection duties, which shall be directed by a dedicated chain of command within the existing structure.

The commission may authorize the taking of wildlife, food fish, game fish, and shellfish only at times or places, or in manners or quantities, as in the judgment of the commission does not impair the supply of these resources.

The commission shall attempt to maximize the public recreational game fishing and hunting opportunities of all citizens, including juvenile, ((~~disabled~~)) individuals with disabilities, and senior citizens.

Recognizing that the management of our state wildlife, food fish, game fish, and shellfish resources depends heavily on the assistance of volunteers, the department shall work cooperatively with volunteer groups and individuals to achieve the goals of this title to the greatest extent possible.

Nothing in this title shall be construed to infringe on the right of a private property owner to control the owner's private property.

**--- END ---**