
HOUSE BILL 1609

State of Washington

56th Legislature

1999 Regular Session

By Representatives Alexander, Regala, Clements, DeBolt, Doumit, Pennington, Eickmeyer, Grant, Mielke, Boldt, Conway and Dickerson

Read first time 02/01/1999. Referred to Committee on Natural Resources.

1 AN ACT Relating to maintaining and rebuilding elk populations;
2 adding a new section to chapter 77.12 RCW; creating new sections; and
3 making appropriations.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds and declares that:

6 (1) Healthy elk populations are a tremendous resource to the rural
7 economy of Washington, bringing thousands of observers, photographers,
8 and hunters to interact with elk. Elk are also important to
9 maintaining healthy ecosystems;

10 (2) Certain Washington elk populations are at risk due to habitat
11 changes and increased hunting pressures;

12 (3) Different cultural perspectives toward hunting, different
13 tribal and nontribal regulations and enforcement procedures, and
14 different views regarding treaty hunting privileges have contributed to
15 tensions between tribal and nontribal elk hunters;

16 (4) Tribal and nontribal elk hunters share a common interest in
17 maintaining and rebuilding elk populations in order to ensure that
18 there will continue to be elk hunting and viewing opportunities; and

1 (5) Combining new policies with discussions to cultivate this
2 common interest could yield ways to reduce tensions while also
3 maintaining and rebuilding elk populations for the continued benefit of
4 all Washington citizens.

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 77.12 RCW
6 to read as follows:

7 (1) The department shall:

8 (a) Establish accurate annual population estimates for Washington's
9 elk herds, particularly those herds in areas where conservation
10 restrictions have been imposed in recent history;

11 (b) Determine as accurately as possible annual elk mortality from
12 all sources, including the number of elk taken by all hunters and by
13 poachers;

14 (c) Delineate changes in historic elk ranges along with anticipated
15 habitat changes in the future and projected impacts to elk populations
16 and herd health;

17 (d) Design hunting rules and enforcement strategies that
18 simultaneously honor tribal hunting privileges and recognize the mutual
19 benefit to both tribal and nontribal hunters of preserving and
20 enhancing elk populations;

21 (e) Identify avenues whereby interested citizens can volunteer in
22 programs to collect needed biological data, assist in preventing
23 poaching and apprehending poachers, and identify ways for those who
24 live near hunting areas to express their concerns and report the taking
25 of elk;

26 (f) Identify existing elk research and enhancement efforts underway
27 in Washington state by federal, state, and local governments, tribes,
28 and private foundations, and opportunities for possible cooperative
29 efforts to maintain and rebuild elk populations in the future;

30 (g) Identify additional resources, including possible funding
31 sources, needed to implement these various measures; and

32 (h) Initiate other necessary efforts in order for the department to
33 gain a better understanding of elk hunting and of Washington's elk
34 populations.

35 In accomplishing (a) through (h) of this subsection, the department
36 shall place primary emphasis on the Packwood, Olympic Peninsula,
37 Nooksack, North Rainier, and Blue Mountains elk herds. The Colockum,

1 Yakima, and Willapa Hills elk herds shall also receive increased
2 attention to prevent foreseeable declines.

3 (2) The department shall invite federally recognized Indian tribes
4 with hunting privileges to participate in a series of discussions on
5 Washington's elk populations and elk management issues. Through these
6 discussions, the department shall work with tribal representatives to
7 identify strategies that honor tribal hunting privileges while
8 maintaining and rebuilding elk populations. In establishing a format
9 for these discussions, the department shall provide opportunities for
10 nontribal elk hunters, residents near areas where elk hunting takes
11 place, and other interested parties to express their concerns and
12 contribute their constructive suggestions.

13 (3) By December 1, 2000, the department shall report to the
14 legislature on the status of subsections (1) and (2) of this section.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The sum of . . . dollars, or as much
16 thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for the fiscal year ending
17 June 30, 2000, from the general fund to the department of fish and
18 wildlife for the purposes of this act.

19 (2) The sum of . . . dollars, or as much thereof as may be
20 necessary, is appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2001,
21 from the general fund to the department of fish and wildlife for the
22 purposes of this act.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** If specific funding for the purposes of this
24 act, referencing this act by bill or chapter number, is not provided by
25 June 30, 1999, in the omnibus appropriations act, this act is null and
26 void.

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