
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 1109

Brief Description: Concerning legislative review of gray wolf conservation and management.

Sponsors: Representatives Taylor, Shea, Kretz, Short, Condotta and McCune.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife from sending the final gray wolf conservation and management plan, along with the associated environmental impact statement, to the Fish and Wildlife Commission for final review and approval without first receiving legislative approval of the documents.

Hearing Date: 3/4/11

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

Wolf Management

The gray wolf is listed as endangered in Washington by both the state and federal government. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has been engaged in a process to develop a conservation and management plan for gray wolves that is intended to serve as a recovery plan under the requirements of the state endangered species regulations and a state management plan should the federal government remove protection for gray wolves under the federal Endangered Species Act. The current planning process involved the formation of a wolf working group composed of agency staff and select stakeholders.

According to the WDFW, the final conservation and management plan for gray wolves will be delivered to the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) in August. Final action by the Commission is expected by the end of the year.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)

The SEPA applies to decisions by every state and local agency within Washington. One agency is usually identified as the lead agency for a specific proposal. The lead agency is responsible for identifying and evaluating the potential adverse environmental impacts of a proposal. Some minor projects do not require environmental review, so the lead agency will first decide if environmental review is needed.

If the lead agency needs additional information to evaluate the proposal, the agency may ask the applicant to conduct studies. The lead agency and applicant may also work together to change the proposal to reduce likely impacts. If the lead agency has enough information to determine that the proposal is unlikely to have a significant adverse environmental impact, the agency will issue a determination of non-significance. If the information indicates the proposal is likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact, the lead agency will require the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). The EIS includes an evaluation of alternatives to the proposal and measures that would eliminate or reduce the likely environmental impacts of the proposal.

The WDFW's conservation and management plan for gray wolves has been determined to require the preparation of an EIS.

Summary of Bill:

The WDFW is prohibited from sending the final gray wolf conservation and management plan, along with the associated EIS, to the Commission for final review and approval without first receiving legislative approval, in the form of joint memorial, of the documents.

If the Legislature rejects the management plan and the EIS, then the WDFW must reconvene the wolf working group and resubmit a new management plan and EIS to the Legislature the following session.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.