
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

SB 6199

Brief Description: Providing for legislative review of the updated North Cascade elk herd plan.

Sponsors: Senators Pearson, Chase, Roach, Bailey and Benton.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to present an updated North Cascade elk plan to the Legislature upon its completion.
- Prohibits the updated North Cascade elk plan from taking effect until the Legislature has had a full regular legislative session to review the updated plan.

Hearing Date: 2/18/16

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) maintains, and regularly updates, a game management plan for the various game species in Washington. The purpose of the plan, according to the WDFW, is to guide the WDFW in the management of hunted wildlife in six-year time frames. The declared focus of the plan is the scientific management of game populations, harvest management, and other significant factors affecting game populations. The overall goals are: protecting, sustaining, and managing hunted wildlife; providing stable, regulated recreational hunting opportunities; protecting and enhancing wildlife habitat; and minimizing adverse impacts to residents, other wildlife, and the environment.

A component of the game management plan is a herd plan for each of the state's 10 elk herds. The North Cascade, or Nooksack, elk herd is currently being managed under a 2002 herd management plan. That plan describes its three primary goals as management of the herd: for a sustainable yield; a variety of recreational, educational and aesthetic purposes; wildlife viewing

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and photography opportunities; and to enhance elk and their habitats to ensure healthy, productive populations. The current estimated population of the North Cascade elk herd is approximately 1,200 animals.

The current game management plan being used by the WDFW envisions regular and ongoing updates to the various elk herd plans, including the herd plan for the North Cascade herd. The listed top priorities for any management updates affecting the North Cascade herd are to protect winter range on private land, promote quality elk habitat that is separate from agricultural land, and to minimize elk damage to crops.

Summary of Bill:

The WDFW must present an updated North Cascades elk plan to the Legislature upon its completion. The updated North Cascade elk plan may not take effect until the Legislature has had a full regular legislative session to review the updated plan.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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