
HOUSE BILL 1353

State of Washington

65th Legislature

2017 Regular Session

By Representatives Dent, Blake, Buys, and Hayes

Read first time 01/18/17. Referred to Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources.

1 AN ACT Relating to commissioning an elk management pilot project
2 that focuses initially on the Colockum elk herd; adding a new section
3 to chapter 77.36 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an
4 expiration date.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that the
7 Colockum elk herd in central Washington is the fifth largest elk herd
8 in the state and is currently managed for the state by the department
9 of fish and wildlife.

10 (2) The legislature further finds that the Colockum elk herd has
11 been the subject of a great deal of planning by the department of
12 fish and wildlife. The herd is subject to an existing herd management
13 plan that attempts to ensure a healthy, productive population, manage
14 the herd for a variety of purposes, and allow for a sustainable yield
15 within the population. Proper management of the Colockum elk herd is
16 important, since the herd is a resource that provides significant
17 recreational, aesthetic, cultural, and economic benefits to
18 recreationalists, local communities, and native Americans.

19 (3) The legislature further finds that the department of fish and
20 wildlife has studied the Colockum elk herd as recently as 2012. This
21 study led to a greater understanding of the challenges facing the

1 herd and resulted in recommendations as to management approaches to
2 address those challenges.

3 (4) The legislature further finds that despite the active
4 management and research by the department of fish and wildlife, there
5 are still undesirable consequences of the Colockum elk herd's size,
6 location, and behaviors. These consequences manifest as significant
7 agricultural crop damage within the herd's range and unacceptably
8 threatens to degrade highway safety levels on Interstate 90 and other
9 roadways within the range of the herd due to collisions between herd
10 members and vehicles.

11 (5) The legislature further finds that the unwanted consequences
12 of the current Colockum elk herd management protocol are not isolated
13 to the range of the Colockum herd. Other elk herds in the state are
14 also the subject of similar management outcomes.

15 (6) The legislature further finds that the department of fish and
16 wildlife should use the Colockum elk herd as the subject of a pilot
17 project that explores the benefits of more active management. The
18 pilot project should be limited in time and geography to ensure that
19 overall herd health is not disrupted; however, it should be robust
20 enough to offer scientifically rigorous results. Following the pilot
21 project, the lessons learned should be applied to the Colockum elk
22 herd management plan and to the management plans of any other
23 relevant elk herds.

24 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 77.36
25 RCW to read as follows:

26 (1) The department must conduct an elk management pilot project
27 to explore the viability of various wildlife management actions to
28 reduce elk highway collisions and elk damage to private crop lands.
29 The pilot project must initially focus on achieving a reduction in
30 highway collisions on interstate highways, and crop damage on
31 properties, within the range of the Colockum herd. However, the
32 department may expand the pilot project to other herds in the state
33 to establish a control group, test results replication, or maximize
34 the benefits of the lessons learned through the pilot project.

35 (2) The department must work with the department of
36 transportation to explore the viability of various wildlife
37 management actions to reduce elk highway collisions, initially
38 focusing on reducing traffic collisions along interstate highways
39 within the range of the herd.

1 (3) Direct wildlife management efforts must be employed in the
2 pilot project implemented under this section, including:
3 (a) Increased use of special deprivation hunts and general
4 hunting opportunity within the Colockum herd. Total hunting
5 depredations under the pilot project must be limited to three hundred
6 elk per calendar year and these efforts must be designed and
7 implemented in a manner that does not conflict with the primary goals
8 of the current elk herd management plan for the Colockum herd;
9 (b) The establishment of a permitting mechanism to allow a person
10 to feed elk by permit only; and
11 (c) The use of managed livestock grazing to attract elk away from
12 roads and private property.
13 (4) Consistent with RCW 43.01.036, the department and the
14 department of transportation must report the results of the pilot
15 project to the appropriate committees of the legislature by October
16 31, 2020. Along with results, the departments must report on how the
17 information gleaned from the pilot project will be used to manage the
18 Colockum elk herd and other similarly situated elk herds in the
19 state.
20 (5) This section expires July 1, 2021.

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