

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESHB 2097

C 450 L 19
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Addressing statewide wolf recovery.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Kretz, Chapman, Springer, Blake, Pettigrew, Dent, Schmick, Dye, Maycumber, Wilcox and Corry).

House Committee on Rural Development, Agriculture, & Natural Resources

House Committee on Appropriations

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

Gray Wolf Management.

Federal law lists the gray wolf as an endangered species for the portion of the state located west of highways 97, 17, and 395 that run through Central Washington. The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) has authority to classify endangered and threatened species in Washington by rule, and has classified the gray wolf as an endangered species statewide. By rule, a wildlife species may be delisted when, based on the preponderance of scientific data available, its populations either:

- are no longer in danger of failing, declining, or are vulnerable due to factors including but not restricted to: limited numbers; disease; predation; exploitation; or habitat loss or change; or
- meet target population objectives set out in a Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW)-developed and Commission-adopted recovery plan.

The Commission adopted the Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (Conservation and Management Plan) in December of 2011, which identifies target population objectives, management tools, reclassification criteria, an implementation plan, and a species monitoring plan.

The Conservation and Management Plan identifies three wolf recovery regions: (1) the Eastern Washington region; (2) the North Cascades region; and (3) the Southern Cascades and Northwest Coast region. The recovery objectives identified in the Conservation and

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.

Management Plan to allow the gray wolf to be removed from the state's endangered species list are based on target numbers and species distribution.

Under the Conservation and Management Plan, the gray wolf will be considered for state delisting if the DFW documents the following:

- 15 successful breeding pairs for three consecutive years, distributed so that each recovery region contains at least four breeding pairs; or
- 18 successful breeding pairs, distributed so that each recovery region contains at least four breeding pairs.

Northeast Washington Wolf-Livestock Management Grant.

The Northeast Washington Wolf-Livestock Management Grant (Grant) was created in 2017 and is administered by the Department of Agriculture (Agriculture). Grant funds must be used for nonlethal deterrence resources, including human presence, equipment, and tools, in Okanogan, Ferry, Stevens, or Pend Oreille counties. Grant funds may only be distributed to nonprofit organizations that have board members or individuals who are willing to receive assistance from relevant government agencies.

An advisory board advises Agriculture on the use of Grant funds and the use of resources funded by the grants. The Northeast Washington Wolf-Livestock Management Grant Advisory Board (Advisory Board) consists of one member each from the Okanogan County, Ferry County, Stevens County, and Pend Oreille County conservation district boards. The Director of Agriculture appoints Advisory Board members to two-year terms in consultation with the relevant conservation district and legislators. Advisory Board members must be knowledgeable about wolf depredation and nonlethal wolf management, and may not benefit financially from Grant-funded contracts.

Summary:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) must also develop and implement conflict mitigation guidelines for each wolf recovery region considering the provisions of the 2011 Wolf Recovery and Management Plan. Conflict mitigation guidelines must distinguish between the wolf recovery regions defined in the 2011 Wolf Conservation and Management plan that are at or above the regional recovery objective and regions that are below the regional recovery objective, and must include proactive nonlethal deterrents.

The DFW must also maintain sufficient staff resources in Ferry and Stevens counties for ongoing response to conflicts between gray wolves and livestock, and for continued implementation of proactive nonlethal deterrents.

Conservation district staff, as well as board members, are eligible for appointment to the Northeast Washington Wolf-Livestock Management Grant (Grant) Advisory Board. The provision allowing individuals willing to receive technical assistance from the DFW or the United States Forest Service are eligible to receive Grant funds is removed. The Department of Agriculture must maintain a list of grants awarded and share the list with the DFW at least annually.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	98	0	
Senate	43	5	(Senate amended)
House	97	0	(House concurred)

Effective: July 28, 2019