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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5525**

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**State of Washington**

**66th Legislature**

**2019 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks (originally sponsored by Senator Short)

READ FIRST TIME 02/22/19.

1 AN ACT Relating to whitetail deer population estimates; and  
2 adding a new section to chapter 77.12 RCW.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 77.12  
5 RCW to read as follows:

6 (1) The department must actively work toward managing whitetail  
7 deer populations in district one of region one with the goal of  
8 increasing the deer counted per mile in the late summer surveys to  
9 fall within the range of eight to nine deer counted per survey mile.

10 (2) Each year, beginning with the 2019 population assessment, in  
11 district one of region one, the department must conduct a minimum of  
12 six traditional standardized fifteen mile transect counts including  
13 the Kelly hill standard transect in game management unit 105, the  
14 Douglas standard transect in game management unit 108, the Deep creek  
15 standard transect in game management units 108 and 111, the Summit  
16 valley standard transect in the central portion of game management  
17 unit 121, the Clayton standard transect in the southern portion of  
18 game management unit 117, and the Daisy-Maud standard transect in the  
19 western portion of game management unit 121. This subsection does not  
20 preclude the department from using additional, updated methods of  
21 counting, as long as those methods are an enhancement to the

1 traditional transect data being collected under this subsection. It  
2 is critical that the consistency of the standardized transects listed  
3 in this subsection be maintained to preserve the long-term trends of  
4 the data collected.

5 (3) The transect counts under this section must track and report  
6 buck-to-doe ratios and fawn-to-doe ratios, and also demonstrate  
7 whitetail deer density and trends. The department must conduct the  
8 first set of transect counts as described in subsection (2) of this  
9 section in the month of August to determine buck-to-doe ratio,  
10 density, and overall population. The department must conduct the  
11 second set of transect counts as described in subsection (2) of this  
12 section in the month of September to determine fawn-to-doe ratio,  
13 density, and overall population. The ratios are an important factor  
14 to understand the current and future health of the whitetail deer  
15 population.

16 (4) The department shall convene two annual meetings in district  
17 one of region one to discuss transect counts with a local, nonprofit  
18 wildlife group based in Stevens county that has expertise in wildlife  
19 management and hunting. One meeting must be held to discuss the  
20 department's plan for that calendar year's transect counts and  
21 methodology and to coordinate local volunteers to assist in data  
22 collection. Another meeting must be held to discuss the findings and  
23 outcome of that calendar year's transect counts, buck-to-doe ratios  
24 and fawn-to-doe ratios, density and trends, updated rolling ten-year  
25 average, and compliant hunter harvest data. The department should use  
26 these meetings to seek opportunities to integrate local knowledge and  
27 expertise into its work on wildlife management and hunting seasons.

28 (5) To increase meaningful public participation in the  
29 establishment of hunting seasons, the department must provide the  
30 public with timely access to both compliant and noncompliant hunter  
31 harvest data. The department must make compliant hunter harvest data  
32 available to the public fourteen days after the January 31st deadline  
33 for hunters to report their harvest to the department. The department  
34 must make noncompliant hunter harvest data available no later than  
35 thirty days prior to a commission meeting to establish hunting  
36 seasons. The data must include a description of the assumptions and  
37 methodology used for determining noncompliant hunter harvest data.

38 (6) The department must recalculate the estimate of noncompliant  
39 hunter harvest data for 2015 through 2019 using the methodology used  
40 in 2013 and 2014. By December 31, 2019, the department must report

1 the recalculation and the differences between the two methodologies  
2 to the natural resources committees of the legislature and the  
3 commission and make the information available to the public.

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