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**HOUSE BILL 1224**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Kretz and Short

AN ACT Relating to accelerating the rate of wolf recovery in Washington; adding a new section to chapter 77.12 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 43.21C RCW; and providing an expiration date.

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

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

(1) The department must conduct a pilot project to explore active wolf recovery options as an alternative to passive population dispersal. The goal of the pilot project is to accelerate the restoration of the wolf population in Washington to a self-sustaining size with a geographic distribution that has a high probability of persevering in the state into the future.

(2)(a) At a minimum, the pilot project required by this section must explore the feasibility of translocating wolves from recovery regions where population recovery has met or exceeded, or is projected to meet or exceed, recovery objectives to recovery regions where, as of the effective date of this section, the natural dispersion of the species has not resulted in known and recognized established wolf packs. To maximize the acceleration of wolf recovery, the department must, when considering translocation sites, give priority consideration to suitable habitat that is located the furthest from any known and recognized wolf packs and the most unlikely to be populated through the natural dispersion of the species.

(b) For the purposes of this section, "recovery regions" means those regions identified in the "Wolf Conservation and Management Plan" adopted by the commission and dated December 2011.

(3) In implementing the pilot project required by this section, the department must, at a minimum, conduct the following steps:

(a) Prepare a feasibility assessment for translocating wolves into regions where the natural dispersion of the species has not resulted in known and recognized established wolf packs. The feasibility assessment must identify the portions of the receiving region where there is an adequate amount and configuration of suitable habitat and prey available to support successful breeding pairs of wolves. The feasibility assessments must consider only state and federal land and give priority to land that is forested and has low densities of people and livestock;

(b) Develop an implementation plan to determine the best methods for conducting a translocation, including the consideration of appropriate genetic source material, release methods, and disease testing protocols. The implementation plan must also identify a process for seeking the approval of any federal agencies for the translocation or translocations;

(c) Conduct any environmental reviews required under the national environmental policy act or the endangered species act;

(d) Coordinate with other relevant federal and state agencies, tribal governments, local governments, landowners, and nongovernmental organizations;

(e) Conduct the actual translocation of live wolves consistent with the implementation plan; and

(f) Conduct postrelease monitoring and evaluate the success of the translocation or translocations in establishing successful breeding pairs of wolves within the receiving recovery region.

(4) The department must complete the process of developing a feasibility assessment no more than six months after the effective date of this section. The subsequent steps required in subsection (3) of this section must be planned and coordinated on a timeline that has, as a goal, wolf translocations occurring by December 31, 2017.

(5)(a) The department must report to the legislature, consistent with RCW 43.01.036, its progress in implementing this section:

(i) Annually by October 31st of each year;

(ii) Upon the completion of each required step of subsection (3) of this section; and

(iii) Upon the identification of any issue that limits the ability of the department to progress through the steps laid out in subsection (3) of this section.

(b) In addition, the department must prepare a final report to the legislature by October 31, 2018, that outlines lessons learned about wolf recovery from the pilot project required by this section and plans to continue or expand the wolf translocations. If, by October 31, 2018, no wolves have been translocated, the final report must detail all limitations and restrictions to translocations identified by the pilot project and suggestions or plans to overcome the limitations.

(6) This section expires June 30, 2019.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.21C RCW to read as follows:

The intrastate translocation of wolves by the department of fish and wildlife is not subject to the requirements of RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c) when conducted for the purposes of recovering wolf populations.

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