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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1676**

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

**By** House General Government & Information Technology (originally sponsored by Representatives Short, Lytton, Kretz, and Blake)

AN ACT Relating to understanding the effects of predation on wild ungulate populations; creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1)(a) The University of Washington, through the predator ecology lab in the school of environmental and forest sciences, must conduct an independent, scientific, blind peer-reviewed study assessing the health of Washington's wild ungulate population in game management units that have experienced a change in predator population dynamics due to the recovery of gray wolves. The goal of the study must be to examine ungulate population trends in various game management units, using historic and current data, to assess whether or not Washington's wild ungulate population is adequate to support the change in predatory pressure resulting from gray wolf recovery.

(b) The study must be conducted over the course of four years, with the majority of any new data collection occurring in the first two years.

(2) In conducting the study, the University of Washington must, at a minimum:

(a) Compare ungulate population trends in at least two game management units where gray wolves are not currently present with ungulate population trends in at least two game management units supporting gray wolf populations;

(b) Consider all predation pressure on wild ungulates and the composition of predator species populations in various game management units, not just the predation caused by gray wolves; and

(c) Include in the scope of the study the traditional off-reservation hunting grounds of the Colville confederated tribes, commonly known as the North Half.

(3) The study required by this section must be submitted to independent blind peer review by qualified professionals who do not have a financial relationship with the department of fish and wildlife or any other conflicts of interest. As part of the peer-review process, the University of Washington must solicit review from the appropriate game management agencies in the states of Idaho and Montana and the Canadian province of British Columbia.

(4) The University of Washington must regularly give status updates during the course of the study required under this section to the wolf advisory group maintained by the department of fish and wildlife.

(5)(a) The results of the study required under this section must be presented to the legislature by the University of Washington, consistent with RCW 43.01.036, by October 31, 2018. The University of Washington must also present an interim report to the legislature by October 21, 2016, that includes a description of the research completed and a proposed work plan for the second two years of the study, including estimated costs.

(b) The department of fish and wildlife must also present to the legislature any proposed changes to ungulate or predator population management informed by the results of the study required in this section to maximize stability in wild ungulate populations and to minimize predation on domestic ungulate species such as cows, sheep, goats, and horses. This report must be provided to the legislature, consistent with RCW 43.01.036, no later than January 2, 2019.

(6) The University of Washington is prohibited from retaining greater than fifteen percent of any funding provided to implement this section for administrative overhead or other deductions not directly associated with conducting the research required by this section.

 (7) This section expires July 1, 2019.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  If specific funding for the purposes of this act, referencing this act by bill or chapter number, is not provided by June 30, 2015, in the omnibus appropriations act, this act is null and void.

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