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**Agriculture & Natural Resources  
Committee**

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**HB 2771**

**Brief Description:** Managing wolves using translocation.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Kretz, Maycumber, Taylor, Buys and Shea.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Directs the Department of Fish and Wildlife to immediately initiate and expedite wolf translocation to reduce conflicts in areas where known interactions have resulted in injury to livestock or dogs.

**Hearing Date:** 1/31/18

**Staff:** Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

**Background:**

Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan.

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 Washington 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 in the entirety of the state. 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 to allow the wolf to be removed from the state's

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endangered species list are based on target numbers and species distribution. Specifically the gray wolf will be considered for state delisting if the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) documents the following:

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

#### Translocation as a Management Tool.

Translocation is a management tool described in the conservation and management plan that the DFW may consider to move wolves from one region to another region not receiving wolves through natural dispersal. Evaluation of translocation could begin when one recovery region exceeds its delisting requirements by at least one breeding pair while another recovery region remains unoccupied. Under the conservation and management plan, consideration of translocation would require a series of steps including:

- a feasibility assessment to establish whether sufficient suitable habitat and prey are available at a potential translocation site in the recipient region, and to ensure removal of wolves would not cause the wolf population to fall below management objectives in the source region;
- an implementation plan, depending on the results of the feasibility assessment, with detailed translocation methods, selection of release sites, and consideration of genetics in selecting the source population; and
- a public review process under either the National Environmental Policy Act or the State Environmental Policy Act. The type of review would depend on a number of factors, including the jurisdiction of the land to which a wolf would be translocated.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

The DFW must immediately initiate and expedite translocation of wolves to regions with fewer wolves to reduce conflicts in areas where known wildlife interactions have resulted in injury to livestock or dogs. Translocation may not exceed a three-year period from start to completion.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 26, 2018.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.