
HOUSE BILL 1698

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2023 Regular Session

By Representatives Kretz, Chapman, Lekanoff, Dent, Maycumber, Springer, Morgan, and Eslick

Read first time 02/01/23. Referred to Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources.

1 AN ACT Relating to providing flexibility for the department of
2 fish and wildlife to collaborate with local governments to manage
3 gray wolves; amending RCW 77.12.020; adding a new section to chapter
4 36.01 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds the majestic gray
7 wolf to be a symbol of the wilderness and a marvel to all
8 Washingtonians. The howl of the gray wolf, a song of nature's
9 resilience, epitomizes their role as an apex predator. The gray wolf
10 serves a crucial role in their ecosystem, particularly to species
11 down the food chain. This in turn improves biodiversity, offering
12 immense human benefits that are almost too great to be measured. The
13 success in the revival of gray wolf populations in Washington has
14 proven to be one of the most successful recoveries of an extirpated
15 apex species in United States history. This should be celebrated and
16 modeled for future recovery efforts. It is important to always look
17 for ways to improve on our processes and further perfect our recovery
18 efforts. In this way, other counties in our state should learn from
19 the more successful counties that have more than achieved the lofty
20 recovery goals placed before them. In order to maximize recovery
21 efforts for all the vital species in Washington, we must allow those

1 counties that have successfully recovered gray wolf populations to
2 focus their efforts on other animals in danger of extinction.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 36.01
4 RCW to read as follows:

5 (1) The department of fish and wildlife shall manage the gray
6 wolf as if it has been removed from state designation as protected or
7 endangered under RCW 77.12.020 within any county where the following
8 criteria are met:

9 (a) The state meets the recovery objective of 15 breeding pairs
10 in the state for at least three years;

11 (b) There are at least three documented breeding pairs in the
12 county or portion of the county; and

13 (c) The gray wolf is not designated under the federal endangered
14 species act as threatened or endangered in the county or portion of
15 the county.

16 (2) When the criteria identified in subsection (1) of this
17 section are met, the legislative body of the county must provide
18 notice to the fish and wildlife commission and to the director of the
19 department of fish and wildlife that the gray wolf no longer meets
20 the criteria for state designation as protected or endangered under
21 RCW 77.12.020 in that county.

22 (3) After a county acts under subsection (2) of this section, the
23 county must enter into an interlocal agreement with the department of
24 fish and wildlife and any tribes within the jurisdiction to
25 collaboratively comanage the gray wolf, including collaborating with
26 local law enforcement to receive and investigate reports of problem
27 animals.

28 **Sec. 3.** RCW 77.12.020 and 2014 c 202 s 302 are each amended to
29 read as follows:

30 (1) The director shall investigate the habits and distribution of
31 the various species of wildlife native to or adaptable to the
32 habitats of the state. The commission shall determine whether a
33 species should be managed by the department and, if so, classify it
34 under this section.

35 (2) The commission may classify by rule wild animals as game
36 animals and game animals as fur-bearing animals.

1 (3) The commission may classify by rule wild birds as game birds
2 or predatory birds. All wild birds not otherwise classified are
3 protected wildlife.

4 (4) In addition to those species listed in RCW 77.08.020, the
5 commission may classify by rule as game fish other species of the
6 class Osteichthyes that are commonly found in fresh water except
7 those classified as food fish by the director.

8 (5) The director may recommend to the commission that a species
9 of wildlife should not be hunted or fished. The commission may
10 designate species of wildlife as protected.

11 (6) If the director determines that a species of wildlife is
12 seriously threatened with extinction in the state of Washington, the
13 director may request its designation as an endangered species. The
14 commission may designate an endangered species.

15 (7) If the director determines that a species of the animal
16 kingdom, not native to Washington, is dangerous to the environment or
17 wildlife of the state, the director may request its designation as
18 deleterious exotic wildlife. The commission may designate deleterious
19 exotic wildlife.

20 (8) Upon recommendation by the director, the commission may
21 develop a work plan to eradicate native aquatic species that threaten
22 human health. Priority shall be given to water bodies that the
23 department of health has classified as representing a threat to human
24 health based on the presence of a native aquatic species.

25 (9) When the commission receives notice as described in section 2
26 of this act, the director must confirm that the county has attained
27 the criteria and develop a management plan for gray wolves within
28 that county or portion of county where the criteria have been met.
29 Within six months of the receipt of notice, the director must
30 recommend to the commission a management plan developed in
31 collaboration with the county and any tribes within the county. The
32 management plan must include collaboration with local law enforcement
33 to receive and investigate reports of problem wildlife, ongoing
34 monitoring of the population by the department, and a conflict
35 management plan. The wolf advisory group and the northeast Washington
36 wolf-cattle collaborative must be given an opportunity to review and
37 provide comment on the plan.

--- END ---