
HOUSE BILL 2434

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2024 Regular Session

By Representative Wilcox

Read first time 01/19/24. Referred to Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources.

1 AN ACT Relating to eliminating the fish and wildlife commission
2 in order to redirect efforts towards fishing and hunting culture for
3 tribal and nontribal persons; amending RCW 43.300.010, 43.300.020,
4 77.04.055, and 77.04.080; creating a new section; repealing RCW
5 43.300.040, 77.04.020, 77.04.030, 77.04.040, and 77.04.060; and
6 providing an effective date.

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

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that our
9 government's first promise to uphold the rights of tribal members to
10 hunt and fish in their traditional territories began with the
11 treaties in the 1850s. The Boldt decision further solidified these
12 rights by affirming the tribes' entitlement to 50 percent of the
13 available fishery resources. This allocation ensures a balance,
14 allowing tribal and nontribal members, including sport and commercial
15 hunters and fishers, access to abundant opportunities for fishing and
16 hunting. Today, the fish and wildlife commission is tasked with
17 fulfilling the state's commitment to hunters and fishers in
18 Washington. The fish and wildlife commission's mission, as outlined
19 in their legislative mandate, is to "maximize fishing, hunting, and
20 outdoor recreational opportunities compatible with healthy and
21 diverse fish and wildlife populations." They have failed to live up

1 to their purpose. They have made decisions contrary to the promises
2 they and those that have come before them have made. They have
3 ignored the science and their own staff, letting special interests
4 dictate the department of fish and wildlife's direction and ignoring
5 legislated mandates.

6 (2) The legislature further finds that Washington state has a
7 rich fishing and hunting culture for both tribal and nontribal people
8 that is deeply intertwined with the state's history. These traditions
9 often include rituals, stories, and values that bind communities
10 together, fostering a deep appreciation for nature and the
11 responsible use and stewardship of natural resources. It is
12 imperative that the legislature take decisive action to preserve this
13 valuable culture and prevent it from being lost due to broken
14 promises.

15 (3) The legislature intends to dissolve the fish and wildlife
16 commission and entrust the department of fish and wildlife to a
17 director who will uphold Washington state's promises to its citizens.
18 This new structure will allow the state to keep its commitment to
19 managing a diverse and robust ecosystem, thereby ensuring the
20 continued legacy of the people of the state.

21 **Sec. 2.** RCW 43.300.010 and 1993 sp.s. c 2 s 2 are each amended
22 to read as follows:

23 There is hereby created a department of state government to be
24 known as the department of fish and wildlife. The department shall be
25 vested with all powers and duties transferred to it under this
26 chapter and such other powers and duties as may be authorized by law.
27 All powers, duties, and functions of the department of fisheries and
28 the department of wildlife are transferred to the department of fish
29 and wildlife. All references in the Revised Code of Washington to the
30 director or the department of fisheries ~~((or))~~, the director or
31 department of wildlife, or the fish and wildlife commission shall be
32 construed to mean the director or department of fish and wildlife.

33 **Sec. 3.** RCW 43.300.020 and 1993 sp.s. c 2 s 3 are each amended
34 to read as follows:

35 As used in this chapter, unless the context indicates otherwise:

36 (1) "Department" means the department of fish and wildlife.

37 (2) "Director" means the director of fish and wildlife.

38 ~~((3) "Commission" means the fish and wildlife commission.))~~

1 **Sec. 4.** RCW 77.04.055 and 2000 c 107 s 204 are each amended to
2 read as follows:

3 (1) In establishing policies to preserve, protect, and perpetuate
4 wildlife, fish, and wildlife and fish habitat, the ~~((commission))~~
5 director shall meet annually with the governor to:

6 (a) Review and prescribe basic goals and objectives related to
7 those policies; and

8 (b) Review the performance of the department in implementing fish
9 and wildlife policies.

10 The ~~((commission))~~ director shall maximize fishing, hunting, and
11 outdoor recreational opportunities compatible with healthy and
12 diverse fish and wildlife populations for tribal and nontribal
13 persons.

14 (2) The ~~((commission))~~ director shall establish hunting,
15 trapping, and fishing seasons and prescribe the time, place, manner,
16 and methods that may be used to harvest or enjoy game fish and
17 wildlife using the best available science.

18 (3) The ~~((commission))~~ director shall establish provisions
19 regulating food fish and shellfish as provided in RCW 77.12.047.

20 (4) The ~~((commission))~~ director shall have final approval
21 authority for tribal, interstate, international, and any other
22 department agreements relating to fish and wildlife.

23 (5) The ~~((commission))~~ director shall adopt rules to implement
24 the state's fish and wildlife laws.

25 (6) The ~~((commission))~~ director shall have final approval
26 authority for the department's budget proposals.

27 ~~The ((commission) shall select its own staff and shall appoint~~
28 ~~the director of the)~~ department ~~((The director and commission))~~
29 staff shall serve at the pleasure of the ~~((commission))~~ director.

30 **Sec. 5.** RCW 77.04.080 and 2000 c 107 s 205 are each amended to
31 read as follows:

32 The executive and administrative head of the department of fish
33 and wildlife shall be the director. The director shall be appointed
34 by the governor with the consent of both the senate and the house of
35 representatives and shall have complete charge of and supervisory
36 power over the department. A person may not serve in the capacity of
37 director without the consent of both the senate and the house of
38 representatives. Persons eligible for appointment as director shall
39 have practical knowledge of the habits and distribution of fish and

1 wildlife. The director shall supervise the administration and
2 operation of the department and perform the duties prescribed by law
3 (~~and delegated by the commission~~). The director shall carry out the
4 basic goals and objectives prescribed under RCW 77.04.055. The
5 director may appoint and employ necessary personnel. The director may
6 delegate, in writing, to department personnel the duties and powers
7 necessary for efficient operation and administration of the
8 department.

9 Only persons having general knowledge of the fisheries and
10 wildlife resources and of the commercial and recreational fishing
11 industry in this state are eligible for appointment as director. The
12 director shall not have a financial interest in the fishing industry
13 or a directly related industry. The director shall receive the salary
14 fixed by the governor under RCW 43.03.040.

15 (~~The director is the ex officio secretary of the commission and
16 shall attend its meetings and keep a record of its business.~~)

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** The following acts or parts of acts are
18 each repealed:

19 (1) RCW 43.300.040 (Director's duties) and 1996 c 267 s 33 & 1993
20 sp.s. c 2 s 5;

21 (2) RCW 77.04.020 (Composition of department—Powers and duties)
22 and 2000 c 107 s 202, 1996 c 267 s 32, 1993 sp.s. c 2 s 59, 1987 c
23 506 s 4, 1980 c 78 s 3, & 1955 c 36 s 77.04.020;

24 (3) RCW 77.04.030 (Commission—Appointment) and 2001 c 155 s 1,
25 2000 c 107 s 203, 1994 c 264 s 52, 1993 sp.s. c 2 s 60, 1987 c 506 s
26 5, 1981 c 338 s 11, 1980 c 78 s 4, & 1955 c 36 s 77.04.030;

27 (4) RCW 77.04.040 (Commission—Qualifications of members) and 1995
28 1st sp.s. c 2 s 3 (Referendum Bill No. 45, approved November 7,
29 1995), 1993 sp.s. c 2 s 61, 1987 c 506 s 6, 1980 c 78 s 5, & 1955 c
30 36 s 77.04.040; and

31 (5) RCW 77.04.060 (Commission—Meetings—Officers—Compensation,
32 travel expenses) and 2013 c 23 s 238 & 1993 sp.s. c 2 s 63.

33 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** This act takes effect June 30, 2025.

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