
HOUSE BILL 1311

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Representatives Engell, Dye, Rude, Waters, Abell, Schmick, and Springer

Read first time 01/15/25. Referred to Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources.

1 AN ACT Relating to the implementation of the recommendations of
2 the department of fish and wildlife regarding the gray wolf; amending
3 RCW 77.12.020; and creating new sections.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the wolf
6 population has grown steadily for 14 consecutive years since the
7 first pack was confirmed in 2008. The northeast and southeast
8 Washington habitat has mostly been occupied by wolves and as such,
9 they are increasing their presence in the north and central Cascades
10 and making an appearance in the south Cascades. State law currently
11 requires a species to be likely to become an endangered species
12 within the foreseeable future in order for the regulatory status of
13 "threatened" to apply. The legislature finds that this definition
14 does not fit the situation of the wolves at the effective date of
15 this section. The legislature finds that "sensitive" species
16 designation is the more appropriate regulatory status for wolves. The
17 legislature finds that the "sensitive" status will protect wolves
18 from unlawful take and harassment as well as preclude hunting because
19 regulatory classification as a "sensitive" species requires
20 cooperative management and removal of threats. The legislature also

1 finds that this status must be reviewed in two years from the
2 effective date of this section.

3 **Sec. 2.** RCW 77.12.020 and 2014 c 202 s 302 are each amended to
4 read as follows:

5 (1) The director shall investigate the habits and distribution of
6 the various species of wildlife native to or adaptable to the
7 habitats of the state. The commission shall determine whether a
8 species should be managed by the department and, if so, classify it
9 under this section.

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

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

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

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

22 (6) If the director determines that a species of wildlife is
23 seriously threatened with extinction in the state of Washington, the
24 director may request its designation as an endangered species.
25 ~~((The))~~ Except as provided in section 3 of this act, the commission
26 may designate an endangered species.

27 (7) If the director determines that a species of the animal
28 kingdom, not native to Washington, is dangerous to the environment or
29 wildlife of the state, the director may request its designation as
30 deleterious exotic wildlife. The commission may designate deleterious
31 exotic wildlife.

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

37 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The department of fish and wildlife must
38 implement the recommendation from the department's periodic status

1 review published in February 2024, and presented to the fish and
2 wildlife commission on June 22, 2024, to change the status of the
3 gray wolf from endangered status to sensitive status. In accordance
4 with the department of fish and wildlife's recommendation, the
5 purpose of the change of classification to sensitive status is to
6 continue to protect the wolves from unlawful take under chapter 77.15
7 RCW, from malicious and intentional harassment, and from unlawful
8 hunting, take, or harassment. While under the sensitive status
9 designation, the department shall administer chapter 77.12 RCW to
10 prohibit the hunting of wolves and make conservation of the species
11 and their habitat a priority. Wolves would not be hunted and would
12 remain on the list of priority habitats and species. The sensitive
13 species designation must remain until the department of fish and
14 wildlife's next proposed review. The species must not revert to
15 endangered unless the population is shown to be vulnerable or
16 declining below the population count as of the effective date of this
17 section.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** The director of the department of fish and
19 wildlife must take the necessary steps on the effective date of this
20 section to ensure that this act is implemented as soon as
21 practicable.

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