
HOUSE BILL 2221

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By Representatives Abell, Springer, Engell, Dent, and Salahuddin

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1 AN ACT Relating to restoring and sustaining healthy ungulate
2 populations; and adding a new chapter to Title 77 RCW.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that:

5 (a) The wolf management plan, as previously implemented and
6 directed by the fish and wildlife commission, must be annually
7 adaptive within each of the three wolf management zones and standing
8 upon their own respective characteristics and own individual wolf
9 populations for delisting;

10 (b) Washington's mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, moose, and
11 other ungulate species provide significant ecological, cultural, and
12 economic value to the state;

13 (c) Outdoor recreation and hunting contribute hundreds of
14 millions of dollars annually to rural communities through tourism,
15 hospitality, sporting goods sales, guides, outfitters, land access
16 fees, and fuel purchases;

17 (d) Rural economies, tribal and nontribal hunters, and wildlife
18 observers depend upon predictable and sustainable ungulate
19 populations;

20 (e) In portions of Washington where the gray wolf is federally
21 delisted, increasing predator-prey conflicts have contributed to

1 declines in ungulate populations with white-tailed deer and mule deer
2 as they are the primary food source for wolves and other predators;
3 and

4 (f) The long-term stability of ungulate populations requires
5 active predator-prey management, timely intervention, and greater
6 collaboration with sportsmen.

7 (2) It is the intent of the legislature to support sportsmen and
8 rural economies, establish clear thresholds and mandatory actions to
9 restore at-risk ungulate herds, and require immediate transparent,
10 collaborative population surveys.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The definitions in this section apply
12 throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires
13 otherwise.

14 (1) "At-risk population" means any ungulate population that falls
15 25 percent below its 10-year rolling average within a game management
16 unit.

17 (2) "Federal delisting area" means the portion of the state east
18 of state route number 97 from the British Columbia border south to
19 Monse, U.S. route 395 from Mesa to the Oregon border, and state route
20 number 17 from Monse south to Mesa, in which the gray wolf is not
21 federally listed.

22 (3) "Predator" has the same meaning as "large wild carnivore" in
23 RCW 77.08.010.

24 (4) "Predator mitigation" includes, but is not limited to,
25 translocation of wolves within Washington, targeted removal,
26 diversionary feeding, hazing, and other actions consistent with law.

27 (5) "Sportsmen" means licensed hunters and recognized wildlife
28 associations that utilize required licensing or permits for wildlife
29 interactions providing revenue to the department.

30 (6) "Ungulate" means mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, moose,
31 mountain goat, mountain caribou, and bighorn sheep.

32 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) If any ungulate species within the
33 federal delisting area experiences a reduction of 25 percent or more
34 below its 10-year rolling average, the department shall designate the
35 population as at-risk and initiate predator mitigation within 60
36 days.

37 (2) Upon designation, within already existing department
38 resources, in order to implement the draft game management plan, the

1 2011 gray wolf conservation and management plan, the white-tailed
2 deer policy plan, and the game management policy, the department
3 shall:

- 4 (a) Implement predator mitigation actions, including:
5 (i) Seasonal or geographic predator reduction around sensitive
6 ranges;
7 (ii) Translocation of gray wolves within Washington; and
8 (iii) Targeted removal or nonlethal mitigation.
9 (b) Monitor to determine population increases over time.
10 (3) Mitigation must continue until mule deer and white-tailed
11 deer populations (i) meet or exceed 2004 harvest levels for two
12 consecutive years and (ii) both the mule deer and white-tailed deer
13 populations exceed their 10-year rolling average.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) The department shall conduct and
15 resume annual population counts of white-tailed deer in partnership
16 with sportsmen.

17 (2) Survey methods shall be collaboratively designed and publicly
18 transparent.

19 (3) A report of the population counts and the annual deer season
20 harvest reports shall be published annually by March 31st or two
21 weeks before the current seasons can be set.

22 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** The department shall annually report to
23 the legislature by March 31st ungulate population trends, at-risk
24 designations, mitigation actions, and progress toward 2004 population
25 benchmarks.

26 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** The department may adopt rules to
27 implement this chapter, including survey standards, partnership
28 protocols, and predator mitigation planning requirements.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** Sections 1 through 6 of this act
30 constitute a new chapter in Title 77 RCW.

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