

WSR 23-17-138
PROPOSED RULES
DEPARTMENT OF
FISH AND WILDLIFE

[Order 23-09—Filed August 21, 2023, 3:42 p.m.]

Original Notice.

Preproposal statement of inquiry was filed as WSR 20-21-057 on October 14, 2020.

Title of Rule and Other Identifying Information: Periodic status review (PSR) of Western gray squirrel, WAC 220-200-100 and 220-610-010.

Hearing Location(s): On September 29-30, 2023, at 8:00 a.m., hybrid, at Yakima Convention Center, 10 North 8th, Yakima, WA 98901. Information on how to register to testify at the public hearing is available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/about/commission.meetings>, or contact the commission office at 360-902-2267.

Date of Intended Adoption: On or after October 28, 2023.

Submit Written Comments to: Wildlife Program, P.O. Box 43200, Olympia, WA 98504, email gray-squirrel@PublicInput.com, fax 360-902-2162, phone 855-925-2801, project code 6483, public comment URL <https://publicinput.com/gray-squirrel>, SEPA email graysquirrelsepa@PublicInput.com, by October 2, 2023.

Assistance for Persons with Disabilities: Contact Title VI/ADA compliance coordinator, phone 360-902-2349, TTY 1-800-833-6388 or 711, email Title6@dfw.wa.gov, <http://wdfw.wa.gov/accessibility/requests-accommodation>, by October 2, 2023.

Purpose of the Proposal and Its Anticipated Effects, Including Any Changes in Existing Rules: This rule amendment proposal, if adopted, reclassifies the Western gray squirrel from threatened to endangered.

Anticipated effects include communicating a higher level of conservation concern for the species, their conservation needs, and recovery actions with partners and the public. Additionally, there is also an increased penalty for unlawful taking under RCW 77.15.120.

Finally, the Western gray squirrel already has a recovery plan required by WAC 220-610-110.

If the status change is adopted, Western gray squirrel will be removed from the list of threatened species in WAC 220-200-100 "Wildlife classified as protected shall not be hunted or fished" and added to the list of endangered species under WAC 220-610-010.

Reasons Supporting Proposal: Important known threats to the Western gray squirrel populations in Washington are:

- Habitat loss;
- Habitat degradation and fragmentation;
- Small population size and isolation; and
- Disease and highway mortality.

Western Gray Squirrel habitat loss is linked to timber extraction, wildfire, and land conversion. Climate change is both a current and potential future threat to habitat. Examples include stand-replacement fire, changes in resulting stand composition, and effects on food supply such as production of fungi and seeds.

The southern Puget Trough population has increased since 2007s recovery plan. However, it is still very limited in size and constrained by the area and fragmentation of its habitat. In addition, the final PSR describes continued habitat loss of >20 percent in the

other two isolated core population areas on the east slope of the cascades due to timber extraction and wildfire. A primary threat identified in the original listing of the species was habitat loss, which has only increased since listing.

Because of the species' small total population size and the isolation of the three populations, continuing threats of wildfires and timber harvest, and a likely decline in habitat of >20 percent in both the North Cascades and Klickitat regions, it is recommended that the Western gray squirrel be uplisted to endangered in Washington.

Statutory Authority for Adoption: RCW 77.04.012, 77.04.013, 77.04.055, 77.12.020, and 77.12.047.

Statute Being Implemented: RCW 77.04.012, 77.04.013, 77.04.055, 77.12.020, and 77.12.047.

Rule is not necessitated by federal law, federal or state court decision.

Name of Proponent: Washington department of fish and wildlife, governmental.

Name of Agency Personnel Responsible for Drafting and Implementation: Eric Gardner, 1111 Washington Street S.E., Olympia, WA 98501, 360-902-2515; Enforcement: Steve Bear, 1111 Washington Street S.E., Olympia, WA 98501, 360-902-2373.

A school district fiscal impact statement is not required under RCW 28A.305.135.

A cost-benefit analysis is not required under RCW 34.05.328. This proposal does not require a cost-benefit analysis under RCW 34.05.328.

This rule proposal, or portions of the proposal, is exempt from requirements of the Regulatory Fairness Act because the proposal:

Is exempt under RCW 19.85.025(4).

Scope of exemption for rule proposal:

Is fully exempt.

August 21, 2023
Scott Bird
Rules Coordinator

OTS-4886.1

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 23-12-051, filed 6/1/23, effective 7/2/23)

WAC 220-200-100 Wildlife classified as protected shall not be hunted or fished. Protected wildlife are designated into three subcategories: Threatened, sensitive, and other.

(1) Threatened species are any wildlife species native to the state of Washington that are likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout a significant portion of their range within the state without cooperative management or removal of threats. Protected wildlife designated as threatened include:

Common Name	Scientific Name
((western gray squirrel	<i>Sciurus griseus</i>))
sea otter	<i>Enhydra lutris</i>
green sea turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Mazama pocket gopher	<i>Thomomys mazama</i>
Columbian white-tailed deer	<i>Odocoileus virginianus leucurus</i>

(2) Sensitive species are any wildlife species native to the state of Washington that are vulnerable or declining and are likely to become endangered or threatened in a significant portion of their range within the state without cooperative management or removal of threats. Protected wildlife designated as sensitive include:

Common Name	Scientific Name
American white pelican	<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>
Gray whale	<i>Eschrichtius robustus</i>
Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>
Larch Mountain salamander	<i>Plethodon larselli</i>
Pygmy whitefish	<i>Prosopium coulteri</i>
Margined sculpin	<i>Cottus marginatus</i>
Olympic mudminnow	<i>Novumbra hubbsi</i>

(3) Other protected wildlife include:

Common Name	Scientific Name
cony or pika	<i>Ochotona princeps</i>
least chipmunk	<i>Tamias minimus</i>
yellow-pine chipmunk	<i>Tamias amoenus</i>
Townsend's chipmunk	<i>Tamias townsendii</i>
red-tailed chipmunk	<i>Tamias ruficaudus</i>
hoary marmot	<i>Marmota caligata</i>
Olympic marmot	<i>Marmota olympus</i>
Cascade golden-mantled ground squirrel	<i>Callospermophilus saturatus</i>
golden-mantled ground squirrel	<i>Callospermophilus lateralis</i>
Washington ground squirrel	<i>Urocitellus washingtoni</i>
red squirrel	<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i>
Douglas squirrel	<i>Tamiasciurus douglasii</i>
northern flying squirrel	<i>Glaucomys sabrinus</i>
Humboldt's flying squirrel	<i>Glaucomys oregonensis</i>
wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>
painted turtle	<i>Chrysemys picta</i>
California mountain kingsnake	<i>Lampropeltis zonata</i>

All birds not classified as game birds, predatory birds or endangered species, or designated as threatened species or sensitive species; all bats, except when found in or immediately adjacent to a dwelling or other occupied building; mammals of the order Cetacea, including whales, porpoises, and mammals of the order Pinnipedia not otherwise classified as endangered species, or designated as threatened species or sensitive species. This section shall not apply to hair seals and sea lions which are threatening to damage or are damag-

ing commercial fishing gear being utilized in a lawful manner or when said mammals are damaging or threatening to damage commercial fish being lawfully taken with commercial gear.

OTS-4562.1

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 23-06-035, filed 2/23/23, effective 3/26/23)

WAC 220-610-010 Wildlife classified as endangered species. Endangered species include:

Common Name	Scientific Name
Oregon vesper sparrow	<i>Pooecetes gramineus affinis</i>
pygmy rabbit	<i>Brachylagus idahoensis</i>
fisher	<i>Pekania pennanti</i>
gray wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>
grizzly bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>
killer whale	<i>Orcinus orca</i>
sei whale	<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>
fin whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>
blue whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>
humpback whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>
North Pacific right whale	<i>Eubalaena japonica</i>
sperm whale	<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>
woodland caribou	<i>Rangifer tarandus caribou</i>
Columbian sharp-tailed grouse	<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus</i>
sandhill crane	<i>Grus canadensis</i>
snowy plover	<i>Charadrius nivosus</i>
upland sandpiper	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>
spotted owl	<i>Strix occidentalis</i>
western pond turtle	<i>Clemmys marmorata</i>
leatherback sea turtle	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>
mardon skipper	<i>Polites mardon</i>
Oregon silverspot butterfly	<i>Speyeria zerene hippolyta</i>
Oregon spotted frog	<i>Rana pretiosa</i>
northern leopard frog	<i>Rana pipiens</i>
Taylor's checkerspot	<i>Euphydryas editha taylori</i>
Streaked horned lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris strigata</i>
Tufted puffin	<i>Fratercula cirrhata</i>
North American lynx	<i>Lynx canadensis</i>
marbled murrelet	<i>Brachyramphus marmoratus</i>
Loggerhead sea turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>
Yellow-billed cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>

Common Name	Scientific Name
Pinto abalone	<i>Haliotis kamtschatkana</i>
Greater sage grouse	<i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>
Ferruginous hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>
Cascade red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes cascadenis</i>
<u>western gray squirrel</u>	<i>Sciurus griseus</i>