

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2424

As of February 14, 2024

Title: An act relating to updating cooperative agreements between the state and federally recognized tribes for the successful collaborative management of Washington's wildlife resources.

Brief Description: Updating cooperative agreements between the state and federally recognized tribes for the successful collaborative management of Washington's wildlife resources.

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Kretz, Lekanoff, Springer, Schmick, Dent and Chapman).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/12/24, 94-3.

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 2/14/24.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife to engage with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation on a government-to-government basis to coordinate gray wolf management strategies.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

Background: Indian Tribes in the United States hold both the right and authority to manage fish and wildlife on lands which were retained by Tribes or were set aside for Tribal use by treaties, statutes, judicial decisions, executive orders, or agreements. These lands are managed by Tribes in accordance with Tribal goals and objectives within the framework of federal laws. The original Colville Indian Reservation was established by Presidential Executive Order on April 9, 1872. The reservation was subsequently divided into north and south halves and, in 1892, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (Colville

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Tribes) ceded the north half of the reservation to the United States while reserving rights to hunt and fish on those lands.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) is tasked with managing the state's fish and wildlife resources. Both the state and federal governments maintain designations for the gray wolf in Washington as endangered or protected. Federal law lists the gray wolf as an endangered species for the portion of the state located west of highways 97, 17, and 395 that run through Central Washington. The State Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) has authority to classify endangered and threatened species in Washington by rule, and has classified the gray wolf as an endangered species statewide. The Commission adopted the Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (Conservation and Management Plan) in December 2011, which identifies target population objectives, management tools, reclassification criteria, an implementation plan, and a species monitoring plan.

DFW and the Colville Tribes entered into a cooperative agreement in 1998 that addresses a variety of fishery and wildlife management issues including wildlife protection and preservation on the current Colville Reservation and the north half through a variety of strategies including joint and cooperative surveying and information sharing.

Summary of Bill: DFW must engage with the Colville Tribes on a government-to-government basis to update the 1998 cooperative management agreement with respect to gray wolf management on the area known as north half. Specifically, DFW must coordinate its approach to gray wolf management on the north half with the approach of the Colville Tribes within the boundaries of the Colville Reservation. DFW must provide a report to the Legislature by June 30, 2025, that includes a plan to coordinate its approach to wolf management on the north half with the approach of the Colville Tribes within the boundaries of the Colville Reservation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The agreement between the WDFW and the Colville tribe has been underutilized. The Colville Reservation has been a success story with many different species, including a thriving wolf population and healthy ungulate populations. The Colville tribe and WDFW should work more cooperatively and share information. It is timely to update the information regarding wolf management due to the growth of the population since the management plan was first adopted. By coordinating with the Colville tribe, it is not a change in legal authority. The plans will be developed on a government to government basis. The Colville tribe does not allow year-round hunting

for wolves. There are fewer conflicts with wolves on the reservation than on neighboring lands. There is better food availability for the wolves in the southern half due to better ungulate management. The Colville tribe has been successful due to managing with science.

CON: The bill subjectively asserts that wolf management policy has been more successful in the Colville Reservation, however, it does not describe the differences between the two halves. Section 1 of the bill should be struck.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Joel Kretz, Prime Sponsor; Tom McBride, WDFW; Jarred-Michael Erickson, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation; Michael Moran, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation; Jeff Flood, Stevens County Sheriffs Dept. - Wildlife Specialist; Scott Nielsen, Cattle Producers of Washington; Kent Clark, Okanogan County Cattlemen's Association.

CON: David Linn, David Linn.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.