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**HOUSE BILL 1442**

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**State of Washington**

**69th Legislature**

**2025 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Abell, Springer, and Dent

1 AN ACT Relating to providing flexibility for the department of  
2 fish and wildlife to collaborate with local governments to manage  
3 gray wolves; amending RCW 77.12.020; adding a new section to chapter  
4 36.01 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 77.36 RCW; and creating a  
5 new section.

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

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that  
8 Washington's gray wolf population has steadily increased for 15  
9 consecutive years, with the most recent annual wolf report indicating  
10 a 20 percent population growth in 2023. As of the end of 2023, there  
11 was a minimum of 260 wolves in 42 packs across the state,  
12 demonstrating a sustained recovery of the species.

13 (2) The legislature finds that the United States fish and  
14 wildlife service, after an extensive peer-reviewed assessment using  
15 the best available science, announced in February 2024, a "not  
16 warranted" finding for petitions to list gray wolves under the  
17 endangered species act in the eastern third of Washington. This  
18 determination highlights the species' strong recovery and resilience  
19 in the region.

20 (3) The legislature finds that as gray wolves continue to  
21 disperse across Washington, there is a need for an incremental,

1 localized approach to management. Regional differences in wolf  
2 populations require tailored management strategies that address  
3 specific ecological and community needs. An incremental, localized  
4 policy aligns with the state's recovery goals while balancing the  
5 ecological benefits of a thriving wolf population with the priorities  
6 of rural communities. Rural communities seek to balance environmental  
7 stewardship with other priorities, such as assuring a diversified  
8 economy that includes ranching and the protection of the public,  
9 livestock, and domestic household pets.

10 (4) Therefore, the legislature intends to provide localized  
11 management of gray wolves in Washington, reflecting their sustained  
12 population growth and the findings of federal and state wildlife  
13 agencies. This policy will maintain protections for the species while  
14 providing the necessary tools for effective and science-based  
15 management, ensuring the continued recovery of gray wolves and  
16 coexistence with human communities.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 36.01  
18 RCW to read as follows:

19 (1) The department of fish and wildlife shall manage the gray  
20 wolf as if it has been removed from state designation as endangered  
21 under RCW 77.12.020 within any county where the gray wolf is not  
22 designated under the federal endangered species act as threatened or  
23 endangered in the county or portion of the county and the following  
24 criteria are met:

25 (a) The state meets the recovery objective of 15 breeding pairs  
26 in the state for at least three years; and

27 (b) There are at least three documented breeding pairs in the  
28 county or portion of the county where the gray wolf is not designated  
29 under the federal endangered species act as threatened or endangered.

30 (2) When the criteria identified in subsection (1) of this  
31 section are met, the legislative body of the county must provide  
32 notice to the fish and wildlife commission and to the director of the  
33 department of fish and wildlife that the gray wolf no longer meets  
34 the criteria for state designation as endangered under RCW 77.12.020  
35 in that county.

36 (3) After a county acts under subsection (2) of this section, the  
37 county must enter into an interlocal agreement with the department of  
38 fish and wildlife and any tribes within the jurisdiction to  
39 collaboratively comanage the gray wolf in accordance with a regional

1 plan developed pursuant to section 3 of this act, including  
2 collaborating with local law enforcement to receive and investigate  
3 reports of problem animals.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 77.36  
5 RCW to read as follows:

6 (1) Once a county acts under section 2(2) of this act, the  
7 department shall form a work group to develop a regional plan for  
8 gray wolf management in the county or portion of the county that  
9 meets the criteria in section 2(2) of this act.

10 (2) Members of the work group must include representatives of  
11 county cattlemen organizations, representatives of county  
12 governments, a representative from a regional nonprofit organization  
13 that operates range riding and other year-round wolf and livestock  
14 conflict avoidance tactics in northeast Washington, and a  
15 representative from a conservation nonprofit. The department shall  
16 invite affected Indian tribes to participate and shall give affected  
17 Indian tribes the opportunity to review drafts of the plan before it  
18 is completed. The department is encouraged to invite representatives  
19 of the United States forest service. The department shall hire an  
20 outside third-party neutral facilitator to ensure effective  
21 functioning of the work group.

22 (3) At a minimum, the plan must address the following objectives:

23 (a) Increased cooperation with input from county governments,  
24 cattlemen associations, and local organizations providing range  
25 riding and other conflict deterrence efforts with respect to the  
26 methods and approaches to minimizing impacts to livestock production;

27 (b) Minimization of livestock loss and economically costly stress  
28 on livestock and minimizing the need for lethal control of wolves;

29 (c) Improved responsiveness from the department on planning  
30 proactive deterrence for ranchers;

31 (d) Faster response time from the department when lethal control  
32 is required;

33 (e) Habitat improvement for ungulate populations;

34 (f) An improved livestock loss and damage compensation program;  
35 and

36 (g) Maintaining recovery objectives and an overall stable wolf  
37 population in the region.

38 (4) The department shall complete and implement the regional plan  
39 within six months and may revise the plan periodically as conditions

1 change. If the work group does not reach agreement on the regional  
2 plan within six months, a minority report must be included.

3 **Sec. 4.** 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 that are commonly found in fresh water except those classified  
18 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. The  
25 commission may designate an endangered species.

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

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

36 (9) When the commission and director receive notice as described  
37 in section 2 of this act, the director must: Evaluate and determine  
38 whether the county has attained the criteria; and initiate  
39 development of a management plan pursuant to section 3 of this act

1 for gray wolves within that county or portion of county where the  
2 criteria have been met pursuant to section 3 of this act. Within six  
3 months of the receipt of notice, the director must notify the  
4 commission that a management plan developed consistent with section 3  
5 of this act has been completed and will be implemented.

--- **END** ---